DE VALERA

BY SEÁN O'FAOLÁIN
(John Whelan)

THE AUTHOR

SEAN O'FAOLAIN was born in 1900 and educated at the National University of Ireland. For a year he was a commercial traveller for books but gave it up to fight on the side of De Valera in 1921. Member of the Irish Republican Army for six years, taught school for a year and then studied for three years at Harvard University. Taught four years at Strawberry Hill Training College for Teachers, after which he turned to writing and went back to his native Ireland, where he now lives outside Dublin. Has written two books of stories, two novels, biographies, a play and contributed to all the well-known periodicals. Is now finishing off his third novel and planning a book of Irish travels. Is married, has two children and two of his books are banned in Eire.

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PART ONE

1

IN 1942 Eamonn de Valera will be sixty. He was born in 1882, on October 14th, in the city of New York, his father a Spanish immigrant and his mother an Irish immigrant. Both parents were Catholics, for Vivian de Valera was a Basque. The mother, Catherine Coll, came from Bruree in the County Limerick. He was the only child of the marriage. His father is said to have died two years after this marriage. We know nothing about him: not even his profession. The total of our knowledge about De Valera's origins is small and he himself consistently refuses to helpbiographers.

The year 1882 may be under sixty years ago in time. When one talks of America, or of Ireland, time lengthens. The 'eighties are antiquity to America and semi-darkness to Ireland. In America Bret Harte was still writing of the dangerous West. *Huckleberry Finn* had not yet appeared. It was forty years since Dickens had slit open the corruption of American life, but a man need also be no more than forty to have fought in the Civil War: and as in Ireland to-day, sixteen years after our own little Civil War, so there and then, seventeen years after theirs, Americans could find family life divided in border states by deep personal animosities. The sordid realities of the war, the political corruption, the bought appointments, were all still being explored by novelists like the now little-read De Forest. How little

removed in actual fact the crude, tobacco-stained commonplace of American life, whether in the country or in the growing cities, was from the Dickens' satirical picture of "Eden" one may see by divesting Mark Twain of his romance, or reading between the polite lines of William Dean Howells. The year 1882 is a long way off when it is question of America—away behind McKinley, Grover Cleveland, Harrison to the rarely mentioned President Arthur. How drab life must have been, in that New York, for an Irish and a Spanish immigrant, even few New Yorkers can tell.

But we do not have to bother much with imagining it because with the passing of the obscure Spanish immigrant who, some say, had to turn his hand to colouring photographs in order to support his wife and child, we come to Ireland. An uncle brought the three-year-old child back to Limerick to be reared by another Coll, his uncle Patrick. His parents pass out of the record. (Later, Mrs. De Valera re-married, became Mrs. Wheelwright, had two more children, of whom one lived and became a Redemptorist priest.) Once we come to Ireland we are on sure ground and all the facts are available.

It is worth noticing, however, before leaving the American years that when one compares the portraits of the mother and the son, certain likenesses appear. The long, straight nose, the pointed ears, and the beaked mouth are common to both. For the rest there is nothing Irish about the face of De Valera. One must presume that his Spanish father gave him that something which can only be called a foreign look: the width of the mouth, the tawny colour of the skin, the deep dark-brown eyes. . . . Cover either half of the face with the hand and it is apparent.

Ireland in the 'eighties was not much more modern (as far as concerned the mass of the people) than America in the 'eighties. Men still lived who had actively supported Daniel O'Connell. O'Connell's great ally, Archbishop John McHale, a figure out of the 18th century, had only died in 1881. The Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Walsh, who lived on to 1921 had heard his father discuss the Repeal with O'Connell. The Parnell struggle was at its height. But, what is more to the point, by the time the young De Valera was nine (1891) Parnell was dead. That blank which follows Parnell's removal so stretches out the interval between now and then that the mind gropes in vain for any series of connecting links that would measure it. And one is left, in the end, with images only of routine life in the fields of County Limerick or County Cork—the boy, between school and home, shuttled from county to county—or of sudden irruptions by the Healyites and the O'Brienites, the post-Parnell factions, whose wild speeches and blazing tar-barrels would, in vanishing into the night to another husting, leave those fields, or those little country towns echoing as with their own emptiness. It is a commonplace among Irish historians that the history of Ireland in the nineteenth century remains to be written.

It is not at first sight a very interesting countryside in which the boy was reared on his uncle's farm, at Knockmore, near Bruree in Limerick; or about Charleville, in Cork, where he went to school. It is flat country; flat and dull. As one may look down at it from some height on the Galtees, or the Ballyhoura Hills, it stretches away to the estuary of the Shannon, broken only by the woods, enlivened only by a little puffing train that appears and disappears among the

trees on its way from Cork to Limerick or Dublin. The main road into Limerick has long, straight stretches that follow the course of the River Maigue.

The farm at Bruree was about six or seven miles away from Charleville town whither the boy took the morning train to school. Unless he chose—as he did not always do—to wait three hours for a suitable return train after school, he would walk, or if lucky, be driven back along one of those roads in the afternoon to his home. But there is no countryside that does not evoke its own pieties, and this ready, rushy, loamy land of Cork-Limerick has its own creeping charm. Gradually one succumbs to the charm of sky, and water, of cloud and quiet. Natural features may be few, but that gives a greater sense of space, and more unity. Little things, like a spring-well, or an old ruin, or even common things like a creamery, or a public-house by the way, or any old gateway that marks the distance for those familiar with the road, become, in time, vibrant with memories. For those who would like to enjoy an extended picture of the pleasures of life at that period, in that region of West Limerick and North Cork, there is a very happy book, *The Farm at Lough Gur* by Lady Carbery.

A boy in young De Valera's circumstances clearly could not have a very exciting youth or a very complex life; but he could have, and this boy did have, a sufficiently pleasant life. The boy played football, shot, hurled, and read a good deal. (It is one of the striking things about the book I have just mentioned that in that farm by Lough Gur they read what to us must seem an unusual number of books; and of good books. Uncle Patrick Coll, also, was a man of some education. He had spoken at political meetings. He was a member

of the Kilmallock Board of Guardians. He had some interest in the growing Labour movement. He was a man of natural dignity and natural talents.) It helps to sink his nephew into the general, quiet, urbane routine of that country between the rivers Deel and Maigue that flow so slowly northward to the Shannon —past little towns like Rathkeale and Askeaton for the Deel, or Adare for the Maigue—to think of him ambling along the country road with the milk on the cart behind him in its jolting churns. And it helps to distinguish him alike from the mass of his young friends that there would be in his pocket a book that he reads as he lines up in the long queue beside the Creamery where spilt milk will trail blue-white across the road. Ireland in the nineteenth century was simple-living, hard, toughening—a stern, antique world. It has left its mark on De Valera, the mark of the "rule of elders."

He was a good student. The Christian Brothers at Charleville coached him well. After three years there he won a scholarship which took him to Dublin to Blackrock College, when he was sixteen (1898). His natural aptitudes proved not to be for literature, or even, as later jokes at his expense might have led one to guess, history, but mathematics and physics. He was given a teaching post in Blackrock, first with junior classes, later with seniors. At the same time he studied for his degree at the Royal University—the present National University was not then in existence. He did not graduate, however, until he was twenty-two (1904) and had left Dublin to teach in Rockwell College, near Cashel, Co. Tipperary. He graduated in Mathematical Science. Fortified by possession of his diploma he came back to Dublin to teach there.

So far his career is true to type—the promising young scholarship-holder who, without a great deal of background, or 'backing,' works his way, by means of more exhibitions, as prizes of around £15 or £20 were called under the old Irish Intermediate Education system, and Scholarships, as grants of various values are still called in the Irish university colleges. He impresses his superiors. He is recommended for a teaching post in a boarding school. He gets his degree. He comes back to the capital to a, presumably, better job. It marks him out as a good teacher that he is here employed at such first-class day-schools as Belvedere (Jesuit—James Joyce went to school there: Clongowes Wood is the boarding-school, the Irish Stonyhurst); or Clonliffe College (the seminary of the archiepiscopal diocese of Dublin). He must have been a teacher of a high order to have been appointed professor of Mathematics—though the title professor is a trifle magniloquent in the connection—at the Carysfort Training College for women teachers. Moreover he is sufficiently interested in his work to read for a post-graduate degree, which, however, he never took, his subject being, again, Mathematical Physics. He also took the Diploma in Education which the National University offers to graduates whose profession is teaching. Add to the impression of zeal and live-mindedness, which this persistence suggests, the impression we get from the various encomiums his employers pass on him (gathered by his first biographer, David Dwane) and he begins to rise in our estimation. "Marked success . . . devoted to learning . . . extremely popular in the classroom and the athletic field." "Admirable care, punctuality, and zeal." "Punctual, pains-

taking, and extremely lucid." "His devotedness to duty and his manly piety were an example to all in the college."

But there is one particular thing worth noting—the young man's industry, All those terms above, such as punctual, painstaking, zeal, care, devotion, would probably lie in Roget's Dictionary under some such general heading as "Voluntary Activity." One observes that his "voluntary activity" was fairly widespread. He is, during those years, between 1900 and 1910, pursuing a pretty large number of objectives. He was teaching not at one school alone at any given time but at more than one; studying the higher mathematics from various angles—geometry and modern methods of analysis under MacWeeny at the National University, metaphysics under Magennis, working up a thesis on quaternions, astro-physics, spectroscopy, and electro-optics under the Royal Astronomer of Ireland, E. T. Whittaker, Professor of Mathematics at Edinburgh since 1912; was Examiner in Mathematics under the Intermediate Education Board for secondary schools; examiner in Irish for the Royal College of Surgeons; and Examiner in Physics at the National University. No doubt they did not all over-lap; but some did.

One special study of a more personal nature was the study of the Irish language, not then, as now, popular, or remunerative. He studied it in Dublin and he had the good fortune to have at hand, at home in Co. Limerick, an old shoe-maker who was a native-speaker, one of the few remaining *shanachies* or story-tellers of an otherwise more-or-less anglicised county. He taught Irish in one of the Dublin classes organised by the Gaelic League: founder—Douglas Hyde, now President of Eire. He took charge of a Summer School

of Irish at Tawin in County Galway: founded by Roger Casement, whom he first met there. In one of these Gaelic League classes he met his wife—Sinéad ni Fhlannagáin, *anglicé* Janet Flanagan. They were married in 1910.

Evidently, then, we are not dealing with quite the usual run of young Irishman. How brilliant he may have been as a mathematician it is not easy to say. His degrees, B.A., and B.Sc., are junior degrees. (His later degrees of LL.D., and Ph.D. are honorary.) He was at least outstanding enough to be a candidate for the Chair of Mathematical Physics at Cork, one of the constituent colleges of the recently founded National University, in 1912. The tradition—these matters are supposed to be confidential—is that he lost the Chair by one vote. After that, he was now thirty and married, his career seemed likely to come to a pause.

But at that point, 1911–1913, politics took a hand. That is an old story, as old as the fabular Ireland who has never let men rest.

2

One must, for this period, picture a rather different De Valera to that of the well-known photographs of later years, which show a deeply lined face, eyes hardened into focus, the mouth drawn sharply together, as by the calipers of wrinkles, from the acute nose to the square chin; that face which even when it smiles does not appear to smile; and which, for that reason, suddenly radiates an extraordinary charm when one meets him and talks to him, and finds him, on closer acquaintance, anything but forbidding. In those early 1900's, that now masked charm was more on the surface. It seems as if with time it may reveal itself more

and more, until, when the tragedy of his middle years has faded from his mind, he may become almost paternal.

In 1904 what is now a man tall and thin and hard as a Roman spear, with a voice like a cracked or muffled bell, and an ordered restraint in his looks, as if all lusciousness has been pared away by bitter experience, was a young man with a tousled head of hair, a soft pair of lips, as of a born talker, and a vigorous, forward-dashing personality. His eyes, at twenty-two, were warm with self-belief, deep with dream—the ambitious forward-looking dreams of youth: at thirty-six (after the Rising) they were closing, but not yet quite closed, on self-possession. He was, between that photograph at twenty-two, with his mortar-board in his hand, and that photograph at thirty-six, which shows the effects of memories of street-fighting, a night waiting for execution, and months in jail, an instrument being played upon by the passions that come from love of country.

Take him at school in Dublin, in Blackrock. So far, country is a mere word. History is a record. Awareness of both is barely an emotion, hardly a temptation, not yet an urge in the blood. How could it have been otherwise? When politics are the prerogative of the multitude, as they had become after the death of the Uncrowned King, the dream dies out. Broken fortunes, broken heads, insults in the press, local squabbles, furious passionate outbursts about nothing at all, the farce of personal animosities calling themselves by large titles—in other words Tim Healy snarling at Willie O'Brien, squat-beard against long-whiskers, rabbles raging about them in every street, John Redmond trying to bear himself like a gentleman against the knouts of a dozen knotted tongues, and

like a Greek chorus the sentimental, nauseating sobbers in pubs over "poor ould Parnell"—what had all that to do with youth and vigour? It was an old man's game gone senile. It was not even history, and would never be more than humorous gossip—or bitter gossip. It had no appeal to the imagination. It had no pedigree. It was the end of a great house with the sons fighting for the crusts. A young man with his career before him could not be interested in it. When politics invaded the farmhouse in Bruree he would sit reading by himself, never uttering an opinion.

Not that important things did not occur while he was deep in his books. A thing like Wyndham's second Land Act, in 1903, was a minor revolution. But one does not expect a youth of twenty-one to foresee the effects of a Land Act. Besides, the unimportant things caused more stir. That mild scheme for Devolution fostered by the Irish Reform Association in 1903, and the tremendous row it caused, and the Nationalist hopes of ejecting Wyndham and the Tories, on the head of it, and the entry in 1906 of the Tories under Campbell-Bannerman, were the things that were filling the columns of the *Irish Times* and the *Freeman's Journal* in De Valera's youth. English Education, Reform of the Lords—important no doubt in contemporary politics, and all part of the general interpretation of the English Constitution—did not come home to Ireland with any explosive force. To all thoughtful Irishmen politics then were, as far as Ireland was concerned, a futile avocation. But thoughtful men are the lonely few. They were, in Ireland, so few as to be a cabal, and therefore for years either unheard-of or a joke. History has justified them, however, and proved them realists.

3

These few practical revolutionaries were, all this while, working with the patience of mine-layers. They were, in their nucleus, the remnants of an organisation that went behind the days of Parnell to the days of the last two armed risings in Ireland—'48 and '67. They were the Young Ireland tradition, and the Fenian tradition. Parnell had used them. They had done desperate things for him; not directly at his command, but with his complaisant silence to give them all the approval they required. The dynamitards, the breakers open of prison vans, the Invincibles who cut the throats of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Burke in Phoenix Park in the year of De Valera's birth, the men who kept the Land League pot on the boil, the men Parnell would openly condemn when it suited him, and refuse to condemn when it suited him better—these had kept up a thin tradition of contact with the passionate dream which died out when Parnell fell. They had become, themselves, for the most part so flaccid that even the police regarded them as harmless poor fellows, or even respected them as interesting bits of history from "the bad times." In every village one met the old Fenian. In a pub a relict might be brought forward as a curiosity and then listened to with growing impatience, and finally edged off the scene. They had already become the stuff of literature. But only "for the most part." A few young men among them still believed that the Irish Republican Brotherhood could be effective. These few secret revolutionaries were to found Sinn Fein.

The antennae of this secret society, known popularly by the first letters of the three words of its official title,

the I.R.B., moved between 1900 and 1914, cautiously but effectively over every phase of Irish life. They had to move cautiously. They numbered in 1900 not more than about a dozen real effectives. The Parnell split had pretty well ruined them, so that, for years, the inner history of the Republican Brotherhood was the history of the taking over of power by the younger men, abetted by those few of the older generation who still had enough energy in them to be realistic.

Of these older realists typical figures were Neal John O'Boyle in Belfast, and Tom Clarke in Dublin. Clarke's history is illuminating here. He had been sent over to Ireland in '83, by the Clan-na-Gael, the American corollary of the I.R.B., to "help" Parnell by dynamite activities in England. The folly of it is pitiful—for that was the year after the Invincibles, whom Parnell had openly rejected and left to their fate. Clarke was caught and jailed for life, and he stayed in jail—virtually forgotten, along with dozens like him. One by one the unfortunate men either went mad in jail under the brutal treatment deliberately meted out to them, or were released in shattered health, until, finally, Clarke found himself isolated in a row of empty cells. At last, after fifteen years and a half—his own record is most moving, the more so for being so restrained—he was released, went to America, and came back to Dublin, where he opened a little tobacconist's shop in Parnell Street. (ironic detail). There this frail-looking and prematurely old man, peering at you as he handed out your tobacco or cigarettes, became with his shop a centre for every nationally-minded person in Dublin. He stocked a few copies of all the provincial newspapers, so that men from all over the

country, who happened to live in Dublin, gradually became known to him. For the young men in the Brotherhood he was an inspiration and a friend. They loved him. "More than any other man," says P. S. O'Hegarty who edited, after Clarke's execution, the *Glimpses of an Irish Felon's Prison Life*, he was responsible for the insurrection . . ."

Other live members of the old Supreme Council were Frederick Allen, and P. T. Daly; younger men were O'Hanlon, Bulmer Hobson, O'Hegarty, Sean MacDermott, Denis McCullough, Patrick McCartan. Most of them are still living in Dublin, unassuming business-men today. Pearse came into the movement. Michael Collins was one of the rank and file.

What had they to work on? A number of not very promising non-revolutionary groups—a literary society here, a weekly periodical there, the Language Revival movement. The poets and playwrights, men like Yeats, Colum, James Stephens, Edward Martyn, A.E., writing for papers like Arthur Griffith's weeklies, such as *The United Irishman*, were unaware of the activities of the secret cabal—although Yeats had actually been sworn into the Fenians years before, in the dog-days—but they all helped in the general fermentation of new ideas. The Labour movement, gathering increased momentum under Jim Larkin and Jim Connolly, also helped to prevent stagnation. The Brotherhood watched for anything and everything that was unconventional, had some signs of freshness or vitality, and quietly pushed in their men to key positions. They neglected nothing, not even the apparently most innocuous bodies, the Celtic Literary Society, the Gaelic Athletic Choir, the Catholic University Medical School. They "bottled"

Sinn Fein immediately it got under way. Men and women who felt they were moving of their own free wills towards the Left were actually being propelled—however willingly—by the Irish Republican Brotherhood's pervasive propaganda. It may be a common technique in our day. It was new then.

4

When, therefore, we picture young De Valera in Dublin, in 1913, aged thirty-one, we do not merely picture a studious young man mildly interested in the Gaelic Revival; or moved, in some detached way, by the great tramway strike of 1913—an upheaval not confined to Dublin or Ireland, the hey-day of Jim Larkin and the origin of the Irish Citizen Army; or watching with a purely personal interest the creation in Ulster of a rebelly Volunteer Force under Carson. He is more than a man interested, even keenly interested. He is a man whom any one of these interests is sufficient, alone, to launch on a sea of many currents; a man who need but raise one small sail of emotional concern to attract a wind that will fly him beyond the "baths of all the western stars." For there are times in the history of every country when a liveliness in the air catches up the slightest dream and dilates it beyond measure in this way. The year or two before, and after, the outbreak of the Great War were years in which forces were at work in Ireland which had not been at work since a man had only to shout the name Parnell to make the very air inflammable.

That is the large thing to grasp about De Valera: indeed, about any Irish political figure before or of his

time. They are dilated by circumstances. Those of us younger men, mere boys at the time, who lived through the revolutionary period which ended with the founding of the Free State took years to realise this simple fact—with the result that when the conditions of revolution disappeared, and the wind died out of the sails, we could not understand how it happened that men whom we had long admired, even revered, suddenly seemed commonplace, almost vulgar. At first, in revulsion, we decided that they had always been commonplace and we simply had not noticed it. The truth seems to be that there is in every man a latent nobility which no willed effort of his own can produce; for it does not seem to be a workaday quality, and does not seem to infect his workaday virtues. De Valera has tapped this latent fire more persistently than any other living Irishman. When he does not speak with this voice of the Irish nationalist oracle he, too, can be—if never commonplace, and never vulgar, for he has a natural human dignity of his own—exceedingly dull. It is one of the tragedies of great men that once they are removed from the source of their inspiration they are not great men at all. The world is full of retired generals, superannuated heroes, irrelevant statesmen—so many sails that the storm once made noble now rolled up in a corner.

The circumstances that took this young provincial school-teacher and released him were largely made by a man of much greater creative force and creative imagination. For while De Valera had to await his opportunity Carson created his. When the Ulstermen turned rebels that boldness of the North encouraged the South, and the I.R.B. seized the moment to launch a Volunteer Force of its own. Breathing on what

P. S. O'Hegarty called the "unsuspectable" men it induced them to head such a Force, and then, in its own way, it proceeded to get control of it. One small example will illustrate the methods by which it did this. It secretly drilled its own men to a pitch of excellence; it was then an easy matter to get an order issued from H.Q. of the Irish Volunteers that instructors were to be appointed only because of their efficiency; the natural-seeming result was that the bulk of the officers in the Volunteers were members of the Brotherhood.

De Valera joined up immediately the Volunteers were launched, in November, 1913, and we have from Mr. Denis Gwynn, one of his biographers, an interesting pen-picture of the man as he appeared at that time. He says:

> Up to the outbreak of the Great War in August, 1914, he was still completely unknown to the general public even in Dublin, except among the students of University College, of whom this writer was one. His appearance was extremely remarkable. He was exceptionally tall, considerably over six feet in height, a very serious looking man in his early thirties, with a long nose and spectacles and a strangely foreign expression. His clothes, of rough homespun, also made him conspicuous; and he often wore a most unusual cap, with a prominent peak and a flap folded across the top.

Mr. Gwynn also remembers him at one of the first parades of the Volunteers, in a field outside Dublin, at Terenure, in these Irish-made tweeds, and the odd deer-stalker's cap, drilling a small squad of recruits. The description is properly objective. It must not prevent us from perceiving the shadow of the myth

over that curiously garbed young man and all his fellows. For they were, in literal truth, living again an ancient fable, bringing to life that romantic Ireland that Yeats had said was "dead and gone . . . with O'Leary in the grave".

Nobody who has lived during that, or indeed any later period of the Irish Revolution will deny this. It was a time when young men could say, with Wordsworth, "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, but to be young was very heaven"; or quote another English poet, and cry—"Honour has come like a king to earth". Nothing could kill that sense of elation—the serious purpose, the nervous tension, the common fear, the brutal horrors of the final stages of the struggle.

Something, therefore, of what one can best describe as the excited atmosphere of a Russian novel—say *Fathers and Sons*—suddenly begins to gather about this slim, studious, ascetic-looking man, as he stands there in that field outside Dublin, in view of the frozen waves of the Dublin hills, putting his fellows through their first paces. His old studies are laid aside. He has found more serious ones. The tempo of his days is doubled. The nights are hot with argument. Life has become ten times more worth while. Henceforth the thought haunts him like a passion that he may, some day, be behind one of those windows in any Dublin street, with a jerking rifle at his shoulder, the Irish tricolour flapping overhead.

They all felt it. Those of them who were poets, and an astonishing number of them were poets (and not bad poets) put it into the most extravagant words, as when, trembling at the thought of the beauty of Ireland Pearse wrote:

Naked I saw thee, O Beauty of Beauties,
And I blinded my eyes for fear I should fail . . .

On the other hand, we have to remember that this emotion was as yet personal only to the few. This romantic excitement was not yet shared by the general mass of the people. Far from it. The mass of Irishmen were satisfied that the Home Rule Bill would in due course become law. They were, it is true, disturbed and angered by the Carsonite demonstrations. They were particularly perturbed when General Gough mutinied at the Curragh in March, 1914, and Asquith yielded to him—largely, it appears, under the influence of Sir Henry Wilson (who paid for it ten years later), one of Ireland's most bigoted enemies, a cold and bloodthirsty man with a genius for intrigue. But from that to positive distrust of Great Britain was a long cry. Trustfully Ireland continued to pour men into the British Army until by 1918 its roll of those who had died "for small nations" numbered fifty thousand men. Ireland, as a whole, had no time for revolutionaries until the Rising stirred its imagination, and the subsequent executions roused first its pity, then its admiration, and as they went on and on, finally its rage.

To complete the picture and make a pertinent comment we might also very properly recollect that there were other planes of life in that Dublin which this young man not only never reached, but never seems to have wished to touch. For what a man does not do is sometimes as much to the point as what he does.

Edward VII had died in 1910, but provincial life does not change quickly, and this was still virtually Edwardian Dublin, and that phrase must bring to anybody who

knows anything about Dublin, i.e. who has read his George Moore, his Joyce, or his Gogarty, a picture of a local society of considerable charm and unusual gaiety. There was the "Castle crowd," i.e. the polite upper-class society which attended levees in Saint Patrick's Hall or at the Vice regal lodge. However, one does not expect a young teacher of De Valera's social class—lower middle-class one might call it—let alone of his political views, to be interested in that. There was club-life. His class again precludes him from this, and again, his political views, for the clubs were without exception Tory. There was the sporting crowd—the people one met at the races, the point-to-points, the harriers, the hunt. Now, sport is democratic in Ireland and always has been. There was nothing to stop any young fellow in County Limerick, who could ride, from joining in the hunt; though among the Dublin nationalists, there was for long an odd (ill-informed) idea that the hunting crowd were both snobbish and anti-national. Snobbish they may have been, though hardly on the field, but not anti-national; they were anti-nothing except barbed-wire fences and poaching; as a general thing they had not enough brains to be anything at all. However, sheer lack of money alone might prevent a young man with a large family and a small salary from indulging in sport—teachers were shockingly paid in that Ireland, especially by clerical folk.

We pass on to that large body of ordinary people in Dublin who enjoyed themselves in ways not open to any classification. If the reader cares to turn to the writer's biography of *Constance Markievicz* he will find an outline of this kind of light-hearted life, which was then as now, open to everybody—a life which Countess

Markievicz, herself a rebel, sentenced to death for her part in the Rising, fully enjoyed: she having also enjoyed all the others previously, except the clubs. This life took some to amateur theatricals; some to the pubs for endless gossip or the enjoyment of local "characters" (a regular part of Dublin existence even to this—melancholy and puritanical—day); some to the cafés, of which the best-known was the Café Cairo in Grafton Street where one met the literary, dramatic, and occasionally political "gang", such as Ernest Boyd, Stephen MacKenna, Darrell Figgis, A. E. Malone, Hugh de Blacam, James Stephens, Padraic Colum, the Abbey Theatre clique. Others, more evangelistic, like Sheehy-Skeffington the pacifist, murdered in 1916, went to the Vegetarian Restaurant in College Street; now appropriately a Government Stationery Office. One met Arthur Griffith sipping his pint of stout at that famous pub, Davy Byrne's—made famous by such as Joyce, Orpen, and Gogarty; or across the street at the Bailey which is both restaurant and bar. That was the general haunt of the politically-minded, with an occasional man of letters, like Gogarty or Seumas O'Sullivan, to give "tone". For the highbrows, or what one may call the *Irish Review* coterie, men like Thomas MacDonagh or Joseph Plunkett—to confine ourselves to men connected with the revolution, for both of these were executed in 1916—such houses as that of George Noble Count Plunkett's were always open. In Surrey House, in Rathmines, one could meet at the Markieviczs' Labour men like James Connolly or Jim Larkin. In short, and taking full note of the exclusivism of politics, there were several sociable, and yet intellectual milieus where one might reasonably expect to meet a man like De Valera.

He was to be seen in none of them. His free time was wholly devoted to study, or to teaching Irish in the Gaelic League; and, after an intimate experience of the Gaelic League, it may be said that while in every way a pleasant, sociable organisation the Gaelic League was about as intellectual as a Herbalist's Club. There was dancing—exclusively Irish dancing; outings in the summer; an occasional discussion in Irish but almost always about something exclusively connected with the Irish language. De Valera led, then, what can only be called a very compressed life, which both illustrates a definite limitation in his interests all through his life, and accounts for that limitation. It also implies a lack of humanity, if by that word one is willing to understand an intelligent and indulgent interest in all classes of people and ideas.

This somewhat exclusive, even ascetic quality in De Valera's nature has, no doubt, contributed to his political influence. As Silone says about dictators, the average citizen is ready to be full of admiration for the man who can concentrate on one thing to the exclusion of all other things—power being the one thing that all politicians pre-eminently desire. It has also detracted from his popularity. We may have occasion, later, to note that it did effect even his influence, in so far as it cut him off from the private minds of men who preferred to settle great affairs over a drink, or a coffee, than in the more usual atmosphere, and by the more regular methods, of the committee-room. In other words his asceticism cut him off from conspiracy—the conspiracies of the I.R.B.

So, in a city then far from provincial, De Valera chose to lead what can only be called a somewhat provincial life. There is only one advantage in that kind of life,

the benefit that arises from the undisturbed surroundings of the thoughtful solitary. He was not thoughtful enough to profit by that.

He has remained, all his life long, infected by his youthful provincialism.

5

To return to the Republican Brotherhood and *their* methods, the sequence of essential operative events is now well-known. John Redmond, becoming suspicious, demanded and received majority representation on the Volunteer Executive. He thereby forced the Brotherhood more or less into the open; far enough to make it break with him. On such things as Ireland's right to neutrality the Volunteers broke into two camps—the Redmondite Volunteers and the Republican Volunteers. Redmond carried about 160,000 with him; the residue came to about 12,000. In April, Carson ran rifles ashore at Larne. His speeches were inflammatory, his defiance absolute. (At Coleraine, in the previous September, he had howled treason to the mob and declared that he did not care two pins whether it was treason or not.) In July, the southern Volunteers ran rifles and ammunition ashore at Howth, outside Dublin, and Kilcool, in Wicklow. De Valera, now a trusted officer, took part in the Howth landing. The whole political atmosphere was by now combustible and just as it seemed inevitable that there must be an explosion either North or South, there came the greater explosion of the War. The energies of the North were deflected. The Redmondite Volunteers either joined the Army or began to dwindle away; for Asquith had promised to retain them for home defence. Later, he changed his mind. Gradually

the 160,000 figure represented only so many Irish corpses in Flanders, or so many belts and bandoliers lying in cupboards, forgotten. The Republican Volunteers alone remained intact and the Supreme Council of the Brotherhood decided that there must be an Insurrection before the War ended. The (still unsuspecting) Executive of the Volunteers was willing to hold them together as an earnest of Irish neutrality.

From the beginning of 1915 the I.R.B. was concerned with two main things—the actual date of the Rising, and how to prevent Connolly, the Labour Leader, who was not of their number, from precipitating a Rising on his own with his Citizen Army of workers. Meanwhile they were arranging with Germany to send help. In America John Devoy, the old Fenian who had been plotting against England for nigh on sixty years, acted as their agent. Sir Roger Casement was in Germany working direct on the German High Command.

By the opening of 1916 they were almost ready. They decided on Easter Sunday, April 23rd, as the fateful day, and they barely got away with it. Since February, 1916, the British Secret Service had been tapping the Irish-American-German communications, but for some extraordinary reason they did not inform the Commander-in-Chief of the Irish Forces, and they did not inform Dublin Castle, the headquarters of the civil arm. They do not seem to have realised how serious the whole thing was; so that Pearse, the rebel commander, was apparently right when he declared that the whole thing was so insane that nobody would ever take it seriously until it had happened. However, on the Monday previous to Easter Sunday, April 23rd, the Admiral at Queenstown told General Stafford, commanding the

South, who told General Friend the Commander in Chief, who told Sir Matthew Nathan, the Under Secretary, who told Lord Wimborne, the Viceroy, that the British Admiralty had told him that a German vessel, the *Aud*, was on its way to Ireland with arms for an intending Rising. Nobody took it to be an urgent matter. Mr. Birrell, the Chief Secretary, was away that week. General Friend also went away. The rest were merely pleased because they could now arrest the leaders of the Volunteers for "hostile association," and in a sufficiently leisurely matter they set about preparing for a raid. This whole mess was due to lack of co-ordination between the civil and military arms in Ireland and the Government in England—a typical illustration of British mal-administration of Irish affairs which, for once, rebounded on the head of the Government. Later on, General Macready complained bitterly about this same antiquated system when he was sent over to "clean up" Ireland in the days of the Black and Tans.

Professor MacNeill, the titular head of the Volunteers (one of the "unsuspectable" men) got wind of the proposed Rising in the same week. More or less by accident he heard of what was afoot on the Thursday before Easter Sunday. On Good Friday he heard that Roger Casement had been arrested in Kerry after landing from a German submarine. When the *Aud* was duly intercepted by the British he heard also of that. (The German crew took to their boats, blew up the ship, and surrendered.) MacNeill, much wrath at the prolonged deception, faced the I.R.B. and after much chopping and changing on all sides, finally decided to leave them, in turn, in the dark. On the Sunday morning

fixed for the Rising he published in the newspapers an order countermanding the proposed public parade for manœuvres which was to have acted as a cover for the insurrection.

At once everything was in chaos. The revolutionary executive was faced by the total and probably final collapse of their plans. The *Aud* was at the bottom of the sea. Casement was arrested. His last message had begged them to postpone the rising. There had been other arrests in Kerry. Thanks to MacNeill the all-Ireland mobilisation would not take place, and at the zero hour—midnight—the I.R.B. found that they would not have five hundred men to command.

To add to their confusion a fabricated document had been published which appeared to show that the Castle was fully informed and was about to swoop. (This document was a peculiar example of the tortuosities of the conspiratorial mind, for it had actually been secretly put together by some of the revolutionaries themselves, either to throw the Castle off the scent, or to force the hands of their own colleagues; or else to prevent Castle action by drawing public attention to what it was supposed to have in mind; or Heaven knows for what other purpose. It was a case of wheels within wheels.) Finally the revolutionaries decided to go ahead. Their plans for an all-Ireland rising were now impracticable, but they could at least rise in Dublin, make a gesture, and perhaps rouse the people by desperate action. They resolved to rise in Dublin, on Monday at noon, and sent out orders accordingly to the city battalions.

Some did not approve of this decision, and among those who did not approve was De Valera, then Brigade

Adjutant holding the rank of Commandant. When the orders came to him, he obeyed them.

So, on Easter Monday, a fine April day of bright sun which drew out the citizens to parade the streets, or leave the city for the outlying pleasure-spots, or prepare for such functions as the usual Easter Monday Races at Fairyhouse, fifteen hundred men assembled in Dublin—a mere handful, and far from enough for the plans which had been laid. In small groups they scattered to their allotted posts which they took without resistance. The General Post Office in O'Connell Street was chosen as H.Q. and on its walls there suddenly appeared a printed poster in rough black type, proclaiming the establishment of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic. The strollers halted and read it. They laughed, or they scowled, and they passed on. Then, gradually, the air became electrified. Rumour ran through the city. The thing ceased to be a joke and became serious. From being called playboys the rebels were called fools. Names that were, at first, mere names, became personalities. The seven signatories to the Proclamation of the Irish Republic became names of doom—their own doom. The little old tobacconist of Parnell Street was now Thomas J. Clarke, the first signatory, his name in a line of honour by itself. The other six, P. H. Pearse, Sean MacDiarmada, Thomas MacDonagh, James Connolly, Eamonn Ceannt, Joseph Plunkett, were not now "Paddy Pearse" the schoolmaster, or "Tom MacDonagh" the University lecturer, or "Jim Connolly", the labour leader, but mortal men making an immortal gesture of courage or folly. At the price of their lives they had suddenly become symbols.

Sudden bursts of rifle-fire from the direction of

Stephen's Green and the North Wall lifted every head. The thing was *real.* Following the heels of rumour the Dubliners found barricades across the streets, trenches in the Green, sandbags in windows, cars commandeered. They found Westland Row railway station occupied, with Broadstone Station and Harcourt Street Station, while the Great Northern Line was cut at Fairview. Rifles stuck out of the Mendicity Institution. It was said the Castle was taken, that the country was up, that German troops had landed. Rumour flew more madly. Looting began. Shooting started up again. The day wore on. Snipers' bullets began to whine. When night fell the city was quiet except for occasional shots. In this broken calm we may see what post had been allotted to De Valera, and see the progress of the event from his point of view.

6

To visualize the post occupied by De Valera, now Brigade Adjutant, one may visualize Dublin as divided into North and South by the Liffey, which flows eastward into the sea about six miles away. The traveller to Dublin from England lands at Dunleary (formerly Kingstown) on the southern side of Dublin Bay, and approaches the city by train, car, or tram (now also by bus) along the coastal road. The city actually spreads out, as suburbia, along this coastal road two miles beyond Dunleary, so that we seem to be in Dublin immediately we disembark. The train terminus in Dublin is Westland Row station. The Third Battalion of the Dublin Brigade, under De Valera, was ordered to cover this road into Dublin, as well as the railway line which runs parallel to it, in order to block the entry

into the city of troops from England; what, in view of the fewness of his men, De Valera might well have called a "tall order." He cannot have commanded much more than a hundred men.

His post became a storm-centre of the fight, so that ever since that week the names of Boland's Mills, and Mount Street Bridge, are associated with his name. He occupied Westland Row station but later withdrew his men from it to the mills. Boland's Mills is a gaunt, grey flour-mill on the canal. Near it is an old distillery. Here he placed a few snipers and flaunted the tricolour in order to give the impression that this was his main centre of defence. On Monday evening, also, he sent his men among the people to fraternise, telling them to blab freely about his supposed plans for pouring men under cover of darkness into the distillery. The ruse worked. When the bombardment began, the distillery was shattered to pieces while the bakery escaped almost unhurt.

Legend inevitably gathers in later years, about such a man and such an incident as his defence of the Dublin road. One record says that his men had difficulty in keeping him from performing every dangerous task himself. Seeing him hurry to and fro between the barricades, directing the firing from the tall windows of the mill, indifferent to the bullets thudding into the flourbags used for defence, or ricochetting off the ledges, one of his men warned him that he was more important than anybody else in the place. "There are better men than myself being killed," cried De Valera, and took his place at a loop-hole, emptying and re-emptying the magazine until, when he did rest, the record says that the barrel was "red-hot".

Apocryphal or an actual fact, it is at least symbolic—

the man burns himself out in action. He has become like some piece of metal hammered thin. His face to-day is a palimpsest of his country's history for the last quarter of a century; every crisis has left more lines on his face, and if, again, one compares the pictures taken of him in the light-hearted days before, and the more serious days after the Rising one cannot fail to see where Easter Week has left its mark. That present leanness of face, that brooding shadow, wearing and darkening his features, began when he stood there staring from his brown excited pupils down the glinting barrel of his rifle from the window of the mill, cannonading thundering behind him over the city, shots cracking at his elbow, and presently the lurid glow of Dublin in flames flickering on his sallow cheeks. That cannonading began on Wednesday when field-guns from Trinity College, four eighteen-pounders sent from Athlone, and the *Helga*, a gun-boat on the Liffey, smashed Liberty Hall, the H.Q. of the Citizen Army, to bits, and began to batter O'Connell Street to the ground. Incendiary shells set many buildings on fire.

That afternoon part of the two brigades sent by General Friend from England landed at Dunleary and moved on foot into the city. De Valera had made his preparations for an advance by road. In houses along the main route he scattered a handful of men—two or three to a house. In one house, by name Clanwilliam House, now a large garage, he placed seven men, who put up a fight that was outstanding in the history of that week. They commanded the little bridge called Mount Street Bridge, which crosses the canal at that point, and with their fellows along the route they wrought havoc among the advancing troops. These

consisted of several battalions of the Sherwood Foresters, part of which took the safe back round to Dublin, via Stillorgan, but part of which walked, with amazing foolhardiness, right into the trap set for them by the rebels. In the words of the despatch report of General Maxwell they met with "great opposition." They were mown down by rifle-fire from the occupied houses, advance outposts at strategical points, enfiladed when they deployed, and generally so hammered that after a five-hour battle which began at half-past three, four officers had been killed, fourteen wounded, and of other ranks two hundred and sixteen killed and wounded. (I take the figures in this paragraph from Dorothy MacArdle's invaluable history, *The Irish Republic*, and since it is sponsored by Mr. De Valera himself we may presume them accurate.) Not until dusk fell, around eight o'clock, and the entire column, accompanied by bombing parties, advanced on the occupied positions, did the road become passable.

But the bridge still remained. Already the British troops had in this section alone piled up half their total casualties for the whole week. De Valera's aide, Captain Malone, and his six men, continued to attack. Finally a Gatling gun and a battery of machine-guns closed them in. The house went on fire. Malone was killed and with him three others. This left only three men in the blazing house, and these were able to escape by the back, to fight elsewhere in the city after the usual tactics of the guerilla soldier.

The Third Battalion was not concentrated in the Mill. Thursday broke with a dawn no more red than the sky had been all through the night. Glowing spots in the clouds all over the centre of the city told the defenders

of the Mill that their fellows were having a bad time. Their artillery was hammering its way to the rebel headquarters at the Post Office, until the city was a desert—its streets littered with loot, fallen masonry, dead bodies.

Little imagination was needed if De Valera wished to picture it. In his own area he could see its replica. It was a strangely contrasted quarter in which he was now isolated, the slums of Ringsend contrasting with the staid and respectable houses of the Mount Street, Northumberland Road area, and behind him, into the city, the dignified Georgian fronts hiding dingy lodging-houses or one-room tenements. Rich and poor alike crouched in the basements, for the sniping was incessant. For a whole day a slum-child and a wealthy-looking professional man lay crumpled up near one another by an area-railings; two little trails of blood their silent epitaph.

The dark and narrow laneways, the warehouses, the crumbling tenements, the innumerable alleys, the yards that abut on one another and make a kind of fenced street between the blocks, the gimcrack walls that can so easily be bored to make a retreat back through house after house, and in the older parts, the Georgian style of architecture which gives on the smooth, unbroken roofs another aerial street, make the entire quarter an ideal battleground for the adventurous sniper. The patrols could never tell from what point a bullet might come. If an armoured car crawled along below, with its machine gun spraying the roofs, the sniper had merely to lie low behind a parapet or slide dangerously away to some other vantage point, and begin his deadly work all over again. It was a terribly dangerous kind of warfare, which demanded the cool nerves and energetic body of an acrobat.

By Friday the men in the mills presented a strange appearance. To the pallor natural in excited and sleepless men the flour-moted atmosphere added a slightly bizarre and rather ghastly whiteness, and as they moved about in the half-light of the mill, carrying gelignite to safe corners, water in every possible sort of vessel to extinguish probable fires, or stole out under the roofs to do battle with an enemy sharpshooter they had the ghostly appearance of men already under the shadow of death. One other recorded remark of De Valera during the week was when somebody asked, "What will we do if the roof falls in?" and he rapped back: "Let it!"

By Friday morning he could locate the Post Office, where clouds of coloured whitish smoke could be seen rising like balloons into the sky and then bursting into tongues of leaping fire. Motes of soot or burning paper came floating on the air. Still De Valera was in a sound position. He hoped for reinforcements, and kept extending his positions. Sniping went on. Indeed, general firing was still breaking out as late as Sunday morning, mingled with the toll of the mass-bells from the city churches.

General Maxwell had now taken over supreme command and had issued warning that he would not hesitate to destroy every building within the rebel area. By Saturday the Post Office had been evacuated, and the H.Q. re-established in Number Sixteen Moore Street behind it.

The British had effectively cut all communications between the rebel positions, and it became plain to Pearse and Connolly that the game was up. They had made their gesture. In the words of a manifesto

describing the fight, and issued by Pearse on Friday morning to any position that could receive it:

> If they do not win this fight, they will at least have deserved to win it. But win it they will although they may win it in death. Already they have won a great thing. They have redeemed Dublin from many shames and made her name splendid among the names of cities . . .

He decided to surrender. At 3.30 p.m. he gave up his sword to Brigadier-General Lowe in Parnell Street. That evening at 9 p.m. the men from the Post Office marched through the empty waste of O'Connell Street and threw down their arms under the shadow of the Parnell monument. Few risings, one may think, have been conducted in any country with such a sense of the value of symbol.

Not until Sunday did Pearse's message reach De Valera's position. He read it in dismay :—

> In order to prevent the further slaughter of Dublin citizens, and in the hope of saving the lives of our followers now surrounded and hopelessly outnumbered, the members of the Provisional Government present at Headquarters have agreed to an unconditional surrender, and the Commandants of the various districts in the City and Country will order their commads to lay down arms.

With difficulty De Valera induced his men to obey. In anger many of them broke their rifles on the pavement. As he himself waited in the street to be led away with his men he muttered passionately, as if to himself:—"If the people had only come out with knives and forks!"

As late as Wednesday, when every position in the city and country had surrendered—for in Wexford, Galway, and North County Dublin engagements had also occurred—sniping still went on. Individual rebels, refusing to yield, dodged from roof to roof and tried to pick off the enemy until the last was hemmed in, or abandoning his gun dived into the labyrinth of yards or slums and was lost.

It is now nearly twenty-five years since that Easter Week, and nobody has yet been able to besmirch the history of a gallant adventure. It had its terrible side, which has gone into literature with such masterpieces as the plays of Sean O'Casey. How many civilians were killed will never be known accurately. In Glasnevin cemetery alone, from April 27th to May 4th there were 216 burials of people dead from gunshot. About sixty volunteers were killed; one hundred and thirty British military; and total casualities to the amount of 3,000. Dublin suffered to the extent of somewhere in the region of a million and a half sterling. Fine buildings like the Linen Hall, the Post Office, the Royal Hibernian Academy were reduced to smoke-blackened shells. One of Europe's finest streets became a tangle of ironwork, fallen stones, crumbling brick. Dublin smoked for a week. Between subsequent rebuilding, and a second bombardment during the Irish Civil War, its old dignity has been destroyed for ever.

Executions began at once. On May 3rd, Wednesday, Pearse, MacDonagh, and the old Fenian Tom Clarke were shot. On Thursday, Plunkett, William Pearse, Daly, and O'Hanrahan were shot. On Friday they shot Major John McBride, the husband of Maud Gonne. On Monday they shot Kent, Mallin, Colbert, and

Heuston. On Tuesday, Kent's brother, Thomas, was shot in Cork. Protests began to rise in and out of Ireland. Among others George Bernard Shaw uttered a noble defence of the insurgents, warning the Government, with his usual keen perspicuity, that they were 'canonising their prisoners', and that as prisoners of war they should not have been shot. "I remain an Irishman," he wrote—and it took courage to say this, in London, in 1916—"and am bound to contradict any implication that I can regard as a traitor any Irishman taken in a fight for Irish Independence against the British Government, which was a fair fight in everything except the enormous odds my countrymen had to face." By May 10th, fourteen insurgents had been executed, seventy-three sentenced to penal servitude, and over one thousand sentenced to deportation.

On May 12th, Connolly, the Labour Leader and head of the Citizen Army, was taken out on a stretcher and executed. With him died Sean MacDiarmada. With Casement, hanged in August in London, the total number of executions came to sixteen. There were over two thousand three hundred deportations.

Meanwhile De Valera was held prisoner at Ballsbridge, near at hand to Boland's Mills and Mount Street Bridge. He was confined in a small room which communicated with the adjacent fire-station by a window. The firemen got in touch with him and offered a plan of escape, which was a good and simple one. They would stage a fire-alarm, and rush out the engine which he would board as it left the station. He could not agree to leave his men, and was duly brought to Richmond Barracks for his court-martial. That was May 8th, when the majority of the trials had gone

through, and twelve executions had taken place. The delay probably saved his life—for the protests already referred to had begun to have their effect. His American citizenship was also of help to those who were striving to hold the hand of General Maxwell. Redmond pleaded it and the American Consulate also put its protest on record. His sentence was formally announced on May 11th. It read:—

> Sentenced to death and sentence commuted to penal servitude by the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief: Edward de Valera, penal servitude for life.

He had faced the court-martial with calm and dignity. Knowing the man, one would expect that. For whatever else may be said of him, nobody will deny that one of his greatest qualities—and it contributes greatly to his influence—is dignity. He knew what fate to expect. To Batt O'Connor he had said it, clapping his palms to imitate rifle-fire:—"You know all I expect is *that*?" All his simplicity and that warmth which is otherwise buried under restraint and a cold exterior came out now. To Dr. Richard Hayes he said in his cell, with touching sincerity:—"I wouldn't give a hang if it wasn't for the wife and kids." Yet when the news of his reprieve came he just looked up from the book he was reading—*The Confessions of Saint Augustine*—thanked the messenger and returned to his book.

He was in due course removed as a convict to Dartmoor. As far as he knew he was facing the endless years of shame and pain that so many Irish felons had suffered before him—and come out, all of them, old or broken men.

PART TWO

REVOLUTION
1916–1924

1

PRISON, at any rate for political prisoners, can be a sadly revealing experience. It throws personality on the screen, enlarged beyond life-size. The prisoner, thoughts are at rest to record his fellow-men at close-quarters, and liable, in brooding, to exaggerate their weaknesses. The symbolic action is over; the actor has been removed from the stage; he has become a private individual. In later periods of the Irish struggle, this disillusioning analysis became frequent.

It was rare at first. Prison was itself a novel experience. It had not become commonplace by familiarity, and the quality of the symbol still clung to those in jail. They were and felt themselves "the felons of our land." We therefore gather very little about De Valera from the records of those who were jailed with him. What they narrate is not intimate but general: it is always something that presents the patriot rather than the private man. As a matter of fact the disclosure of character did not fully take place until the revolution entered into its second phase of Civil War—and then the disclosure was generally out of focus. Irishmen are only slowly learning to do equal justice to the symbolic and the personal, the public and the private, in their modern leaders.

When the prisoners first found themselves in such convict-prisons as Dartmoor they were still under the shadow of their recent experiences. They were meek and obedient, a little dispirited. One knows this from their subsequent private conversation. I have heard one of them admit it in public in one of those lectures on *My Life in Jail* which so many of them had to deliver on their release for propaganda purposes. Then, by degrees the pall lifted. They found, somewhat to their astonishment, that they were alive. Word was also coming in from Ireland that the people were not wholly against them. They began to reorganise their spirits, and to consider how the fight could be continued inside prison walls.

De Valera, in Dartmoor, was not as badly off as old Tom Clarke had been. He had sixty-four fellow Irishmen also wearing the broad arrow. That same May of Sixteen they were suddenly joined by MacNeill (who had countermanded the orders for Easter Sunday, but later appealed to the people to support the Rising). Robert Brennan, who had led the insurgents in Wexford, has described what occurred one morning when the convicts were lined up for inspection in the gloomy central hall of Dartmoor, where even in summer you could smell the fog-damp outside. There was dead silence. Suddenly a few prisoners came clanking down the iron stairs—foremost being MacNeill. It was the first time he faced the men whose plans he had upset. Like a flash De Valera stepped out of the silent ranks of convicts and faced his fellow convicts. He shouted a command: "Volunteers! Attention! Eyes left!" Amazed at the chivalry of the salute they obeyed. It was the first act of revolt inside jail. De Valera was hustled to the cells, but released that afternoon.

That kind of thing was repeated in other forms, and De Valera was finally removed to Maidstone. The insubordination went on in Dartmoor, even as it was also breaking out continually in the other jails and concentration camps. The convicts were then massed in Lewes, and there, as senior officer, De Valera was elected by the men as their leader. This was partly responsible, no doubt, for the influence and position he was able to assume later on his release, but it is patent that he would, in any case, have been considered an important man as Adjutant to the Dublin Brigade, the last commandant to surrender, a man sentenced to death, and one closely connected with the dead leaders. Only a few days after he was thus elected leader of the men, one of them was put on bread and water for talking during work. At once De Valera ordered a general strike, and again the Governor came to terms.

In other ways the prisoners were becoming a considerable embarrassment to the Government. The international situation had given them, and the Irish question, an enormous importance abroad. The Government, angling for American support in the War, found the powerful Irish influence in America turned against them by the Rising and the subsequent executions. Shaw had been dead right about this, but like all prophets he had not been heeded in time. As the Irish-German bloc in America gradually became the despair of British diplomacy, the Government at home realised the folly of proceeding further with the "canonisation" of the insurgents. The real question now was how to get rid of them and placate an infuriated Ireland with a good face, without, on the other hand, alienating the North or annoying its Tory supporters in England.

Lloyd George was given this difficult task, but his disingenuous methods only made matters worse by turning the Irish Party against him, and the Irish people against the Irish Party. In addition the Irish Church began to roll up behind the insurgents and turn its back on the old-time politicians.

The history of how the Sinn Fein idea became consolidated in jail, where the men were all potential leaders (they included, among others, the as-yet-unknown Michael Collins) would make a book in itself. Books have been written about the subject by the dozen. It must suffice to say that in the jails and camps the future revolution was, in the words of Hussey-Burgh's famous metaphor, planted as dragon's teeth that were, later, to spring up as armed men. By the summer the Government had released these embryo rebels in their hundreds. By December, 1916, the necessity for an ameliorative policy had emptied every concentration camp. Only the convicts remained, including De Valera.

Among those released were Collins and Griffith, who at once began a new campaign. In February, 1917, they contested an election against the Irish Party in Roscommon, and won it by two to one. In April, a Lewes "convict" was put up for another bye-election and won again. It seemed clear that the country had finished for good and all with the old regime, and gone back to those far older memories where every fighting patriot has his niche and his votive lamp. It seemed, indeed, as if the guns of Easter week had blown away the dust of oblivion that for so long had settled on those pictures of Emmet raising his sword, and Tone with his hooked nose to the west, and let it settle on Collge

Green and the old Irish House of Parliament—the symbol of the Irish Party. Now it was the ruins of O'Connell Street that became a place of pilgrimage. To the sacred litany of the old Irish dead the young folk were adding the names of Pearse, and Connolly, and MacBride, and the poets were singing of them—Yeats, A. E., Stephens, even Ledwidge over in France fighting beside their executioners, Padraic Colum, Seumas O'Sullivan: all who had known and liked these men. In a word Parliamentarianism was evidently finished.

General Maxwell was now recalled, Asquith resigned, and Lloyd George put on the velvet glove. Whereupon, as if to add fresh fuel to the fire, or as if the Government could not make up its mind on its policy, there were more raids, more arrests, and so, more martyrs. This, even while Lloyd George was planning fresh overtures with a view to setting up a Convention where all representative Irishmen—he even included an invitation to Sinn Fein—would solve the problem for him. It was this Convention which served, indirectly, to release De Valera and his colleagues. For the new movement outside now began to concentrate on the demand for their release, an appeal which no Irish audience could possibly resist.

Inside, under De Valera's leadership, the prisoners had meanwhile revolted absolutely, demanded treatment as prisoners of war, smashed furniture and windows, and broken down partitions; with the result that they were divided again, into separate jails—Portland, Maidstone, Parkhurst. Another bye-election was now approaching, East Clare, and for this constituency the men outside nominated De Valera. It was

probably the first time his name came before the entire country as an acknowledged leader. All this was so inimical to the right atmosphere needed for a Convention that it was decided to release the remaining prisoners.

On June 16th they were duly released in a body. They landed in Dublin, about a hundred of them, on the morning of the 18th, met to their astonishment by wildly cheering crowds. They drove in carriages through the crowded city, lifting their cropped heads to see again the ruins of the streets where they had fought, over a year before. Then they had been jeered, execrated, regarded with sullen eyes. Now, their ears were deafened with the shouts and the singing. They sang back the song that has become the national anthem of Ireland—*The Soldier's Song*:

Men of the Gael, Sons of the Pale,
The long watched day is breaking.
The serried ranks of Inisfail
Shall set the tyrant quaking.
Our camp-fires now are burning low—
See, in the East, a silvery glow,
Out yonder waits the Saxon foe—
So chant a soldier's song.

Soldiers are we,
Whose lives are pledged to Ireland.
Some have come
From a land beyond the wave,
Sworn to be free.
No more, our ancient sireland,
Shall shelter the despot or the slave.

To-night we man the bearna baoghail[1],
In Erin's cause come woe or weal,
Mid cannon's roar, or rifle's peal
We will chant a soldier's song.

Thousands saw now for the first time the tall figure of their future leader. They saw his eyes light up, and knew that it was a proud moment for him and for the cause for which he had fought. He would not have been human if there did not come a gulp in his throat to hear the strains of that Irish *Marseillaise* rise over those cold ruins like the spirit of his dead friends.

2

The Clare Election hurled him at once into the role he has never since laid down—that of politician and statesman. And yet, being of an unfree land, his life bore no resemblance to that of the politician elsewhere. It had all the abnormality of the soldier's life without its directness of purpose, or even its pauses. He had not sought notoriety. He was by nature the recluse and the student. He had even taken part in the Rising against his judgement, and he told his friends now, that as for politics he knew little of them and did not like them. Before he was much older he was to like them far less.

That summer and autumn of 1917 saw De Valera, the man hitherto known to the comparative few, transformed into the national leader. The Clare Election brought him to the front, and it was fought so bitterly and watched so eagerly by all sides that, as with that famous

[1] Bearna Baoghail. Pronounced—*bahrna bweel.* Meaning—'The Gap of Danger.'

Clare Election which put Dan O'Connell, as the first Catholic since the Reformation, into Parliament, it became again a symbol of nation against empire. (Everything, in those days, as will have already become apparent, was treated as a symbol.) The Party fought the election to the last ditch, but the tide was against them. De Valera was elected by well over two to one. A month later, at Kilkenny, Alderman William Cosgrave, later President of the Irish Free State, inflicted a similar defeat on the old regime.

Not until October, however, was De Valera acknowledged as leader. Then the Ard Fheis or Annual Convention of Sinn Fein gathered in Dublin, and he was elected President. The circumstances are important and define the conditions of the new movement for Independence. We must consider these briefly.

The old distinction, rather than difference—which is too strong a word—between the Republican Brotherhood and Sinn Fein made itself evident at once. The Brotherhood had brought the Insurrection about and were strictly Republican. Sinn Fein, under Griffith's leadership, had never been Republican, and its aim was rather for a Dual Monarchy, with the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland, and the old Constitution of the Irish Parliament of 1782—before the Union. The Brotherhood was now at work again, though De Valera, who had joined it before 1916, now resigned and opposed the idea of a secret society.

One thus had a Republican body of opinion, represented by the Brotherhood and the Volunteers—who had reorganised—and the more moderate and much larger section of opinion in the Sinn Fein clubs. De Valera was somewhere in between them both, popular

with each, representing neither alone. He was admirably suited for the position of a national leader who would reconcile both bodies of opinion, and we here get, for the first time, a clear sight of that non-committal, semi-theological, discriminating mind of his in the formula with which he satisfied the Ard Fheis of Sinn Fein as to the *aims* it would put before it. It would, perhaps, have been as well to say that the I.R.B., though it was not willing to see eye to eye with Sinn Fein (the political, or non-military side of the movement) had, as usual, been careful to get solid representation in it, so that they, under the surface, had to be satisfied as well as the non-I.R.B. delegates who knew nothing much about them. The formula proposed by De Valera was as follows:

> Sinn Fein aims at securing international recognition of Ireland as an independent Irish Republic. Having achieved that status the Irish people may, by Referendum, freely choose their own form of Government.

That pleased both sides.

It is worth while to comment on this solution. It was what De Valera had said he knew little of, and did not like—it was politics. It was a politician's compromise. What it meant, in actual working, was that everybody henceforth accepted that the primal aim of the country was an Irish Republic, while what that would mean in practice was not defined. People vaguely felt that it meant political freedom from English rule: what degree of association with Great Britain and the Empire might be tolerated they did not consider—it was too soon to go into these fine points. But when a nation

dreams of its political freedom it dreams magnificently, and when its leaders appeal to a people they appeal to them with magniloquence. The people therefore thought that the term Republic meant absolute isolationist independence—a state like that of Belgium or Denmark. Five years later when the thing came down to details it became translucently clear that only one man knew his own mind about the political actuality of the word Freedom, and that man was Griffith. The men who now, in 1917, i.e. the I.R.B., were afraid that he was too moderate, flocked after him in 1922 as men will always flock after a decisive mind. While those same men who had put De Valera up against Griffith in 1917, as President of Sinn Fein, and thus as leader of the people, abandoned him in 1922 during the debates on "The Treaty" as too extreme.

A very important thing, further, to note at this point is that the I.R.B. were here, 1917, putting into power a man who was not, any longer, of their number. The result was that for five years De Valera, as leader, was cut off from the secrets of the I.R.B.—indeed he was very nearly in the position of Professor MacNeill in 1916, the man who only discovered the week before the Rising what the armed force he thought he led was really planning to do. The I.R.B. backed De Valera from 1917 to 1922. In 1922 they turned on him. In 1922 Griffith also turned on him. He had, in short, for five years led two parties; they combined against him; he had failed to consolidate his position with either—which was a tribute to his honesty if not to his political foresight—and he fell between them. That was one occasion when his capacity for discrimination (what his enemies have called hair-splitting) was his ruin.

As this new movement began (to use a motoring vulgarism) to "rev up," De Valera began to formulate slowly for himself and for his people the political philosophy of the future Ireland. Mr. P. S. O'Hegarty, the best exponent of the I.R.B. philosophy, has summed up his work and his methods and his value in those years:

> He was a slow-moving, painfully uncouth, massive speaker, with a disarming habit of pouring forth as new discoveries things which had been for twenty years the commonplaces of separatist thought. His great value to the country was his honesty, and his simplicity, and his single-mindedness. He restated in plain, simple language, in speeches which were of general application to the nations as well as of particular application to Ireland, the unassailable moral and international principles upon which Ireland's case rested; while his personality and integrity had a big influence at home in ranging all sections of Nationalist opinion behind the movement of which he was the spokesman.

It is a good summing-up. Yet, without in any way exaggerating the facts, it would not be disimproved by a greater degree of approbation. For De Valera's task was heavy. Ireland, even still adolescent in separatist political thought, was then almost ignorant of it, and it had a long tradition of internecine warfare between the Right and Left. So O'Connell, the first Irish political leader—and one of the great international figures of his time—a constitutionalist like Griffiths, was discredited by the Leftist Young Irelanders. Parnell took up where O'Connell left off, and the Fenians and the

Land Leaguers were perpetually fighting him. Redmond followed Parnell, and the Republican Volunteers of 1916 and after shouldered him into obscurity. De Valera may or may not have realised that the old problem would arise again if the situation were not carefully handled. Whether he saw it or not he did handle it with endless tact and patience.

His patience has given a handle to his critics to charge him with being professorial and niggling. He presented, in any case, a somewhat stern appearance in the crowded Mansion House where Sinn Fein met, as he does to every public meeting he has ever addressed; and it is not to be denied that he was—and is—a poor orator—one of the very poorest in Irish history. He is long-winded, and he is too expository. He has a habit of explaining things too much, which may well come from his early training as a teacher. He rarely if ever fires an audience with his speeches, so that they seem to be held more by loyalty than interest. He has a passion for detail, and a liking for recapitulation which has at times taken him back a very long way from the subject before him. And yet what alternative had he then but to avoid the exaggeration, or the categorical absolutes which less responsible men could have used to get easy effects? He was not only the mediator, but he was the expositor of the new Irish political thought, and though the I.R.B. might feel that what he was saying was often "a commonplace," the subsequent history of Ireland, the internecine strife, the endless arguments, the cries of traitor hurled from one party to another, the endless appeals to Irish history, the defining and redefining of terms, all shew that there is no such thing as a commonplace in the political philosophy of a young nation

with all the complexities of youth and none of the political tradition of age. The De Valera of to-day, with all his qualities and all his faults, and his best friend and worst enemy will not deny him both, may be traced to that period when he was completing his own political education and the political education of his people.

There one stops dead. At those last few words. For this idea of De Valera's that he was fated to "educate" overcasts the whole man, his character, his temperament, and all our judgements of him. No man can think of his former teacher as a grown-up man. The teacher, though you meet him forty years after, will still be found talking as to an adolescent; and what one does is to leave him with one's adolescence (since he seems to like it) and invest him with it. De Valera, as we saw, never mixed with his equals as a young man, or a growing man. While his equals in age and thought were hammering out endless arguments at the Café Cairo, or the Vegetarian, or Davy Byrne's, or the Bailey, he was away in the Gaelic League with young people who regarded him as a teacher who regarded them as pupils. All his life long he has had that chasm between him and his fellows. He has explained, he has lectured, he has corrected, he has preached. He has never conversed. He has never been contradicted—until he went to America and men like Judge Cohalan and old Devoy would not stand being lectured; and he at once quarrelled furiously with both of them.

That in him can be comic, and it is a serious deficiency. It keeps his followers from growing up themselves. The typical adoring De Valera-ite talks like a schoolboy, or a neophyte who has received the Gospel and will

not dare question it. He is thus less a leader than a teacher—and the difference is immense. The true leader, like Dan O'Connell, said, "Watch me! This is the way to do it!" And the people rose up and were free men and democrats, using their own lives and their own brains and initiative. De Valera says, "Obey me! I'll do it for you." And crowds himself about with obedient men who, when he is gone, will be just where they were when he found them. If it be said that this is bad teaching, so it is. It is all theory. Year after year, to this day, the Ard Fheis, or Annual Convention, of his party machine meets and brings along resolutions, and year after year De Valera gets up and explains to them carefully and clearly, where they are astray. His general attitude in the Dail is one of gentle and courteous patience, or occasionally of irritated exasperation with somebody's lack of understanding, or deliberate misrepresentation. It is perfectly clear that he is always certain that if people would only listen carefully, and really opened their minds, they could not fail to agree with him. Once or twice he has lost control, and then his epithet has, characteristically, been "Fools." This bland assurance, very near to priggishness, is maddening.

There are comic stories about this side of De Valera. One cannot, of course, guarantee their veracity, but they have, like all such stories about public men, the veracity of the general opinion about him which they illustrate. In the later stages of the revolution (as is well-known) a bitter jealousy arose between Collins and the Minister for Defence, Cathal Brugha—or to call him as all his friends did, Charlie Burgess, which helps to replace the "hero" by the man. Collins com-

plained to De Valera about this, and De Valera said: "I'll see about that." A few days later somebody found De Valera in a room with Burgess sitting before him, overcome like a small boy being put through the mill, and Burgess was wailing, "But, Dev., I *can't* be wrong, now. I *can't* be wrong." Two minds that cannot be wrong make a difficult pair.

There is the wholly farcical story of the poor old priest who went a little soft in the head, and formed the notion that if the Vatican dispensed the Irish Church from the rule of celibacy it would settle all Irish troubles. He had gone to Rome. He had been fended off from the Pope. At some vast public procession he had cast himself, with his petition, before the Papal carriage. He had been gently urged back to Ireland where, finally, he sought out De Valera with his great scheme, and the story concludes that, "'Dev' gave him a little lecture for half an hour and the old priest was never seen or heard-of since." It is, probably, a total fabrication—a characteristic Dublin elaboration of some petty incident. Yet the thing one says about it is: "True or untrue, 'Dev' *lectured* him!"

But, as with all characters, whom one may from time to time think a little comical, is there not even in this frailty of De Valera's at least one human touch? And does not that frailty, that touch of humanity, make one feel a little more sympathetic towards him? (Though, how different that is to feeling that *he* is what the French call *sympathique*!) It must keep him so very lonely—so cut off from all that is casual, and idle, and of the common, warm run of life. Once in the Dail, in a moment of exuberance, he said: "I feel like a boy among boys." It was one of the truest things he ever

said about himself and about his followers. I should think that, in many ways, he must, with that perpetual adolescence of the teacher, that youthfulness of the idealist, that simplicity of mind, make an ideal family-man. He always gets on well with young people, and socially he is charming, being by nature without any conventional affectation, and being in that kind of milieu released from his solemnity.

3

The winter of 1917 and the spring of 1918 proved that Sinn Fein—as the whole movement now began to be called—had not, as at first seemed, swept the country. In three successive bye-elections the Irish Party whacked the revolutionaries. It became plain unless De Valera could forcibly put before his people something more hopeful than a merely emotional appeal, something practical, he might soon find himself heading a mere handful of visionaries. Once again Coercion came to his help. In April, 1918, the Government declared that Conscription would be extended to Ireland, with the result that within one month upwards of some 100,000 men had joined the Volunteers, the Irish Party abandoned Westminster, and every force in Ireland joined to resist—Sinn Fein, the old Irish Party, Labour, the Independents, the Church. What De Valera had said in the previous summer was becoming true—"Senn Fein has a definite policy, to make English rule impossible in Ireland." The Volunteers and Sinn Fein were now so active that military law was declared in one county, all over the country newspapers were suppressed, and men were being arrested everywhere under various charges.

Meanwhile, Lloyd George's Convention produced its abortive report, and apparently, in despair of ever achieving anything by his ameliorative measure he suddenly changed his tune. On May 18th, 1918, a widespread police raid arrested almost every Irishman prominent in the Sinn Fein movement. Among them was De Valera. He remained in jail for the better part of a year. The ostensible excuse for these arrests was a "German Plot" of which no real evidence was ever produced.

One man who escaped arrest in these raids was Michael Collins, and for some time the history of the revolution really becomes his biography. For with De Valera in jail, and Griffith in jail, and with Sinn Fein, the Volunteers, the Gaelic League, and Cumann nam Ban (the women's organisation) all banned, the game was falling into the hands of the men of action. From that spring of 1918 things began to whirl.

The Volunteers, legally suppressed, and now of large proportions, met and drilled in secret—in lonely glens, or, in the cities in clubs with innocuous names. Men began to sleep from home. Raids increased. Police began to retire to their barracks after nightfall and peep by day through the shutters. Collins and his lieutenants were now rushing here and there, working like giants, perfecting a system of espionage which was later to smash the British Secret Service in Ireland. (The reader who would like an extended picture of Collins at work should go to that exciting book entitled *The Big Fellow*, by Frank O'Connor). On one occasion Cathal Brugha, then Chief of Staff of the Volunteers, now becoming known as the I.R.A., or the Irish Republican Army, was in London perfecting plans for personal

reprisals on members of the British Government should Conscription be enforced. All that autumn arms were being smuggled in and munitions manufactured in secret, chiefly hand grenades, while, on the political side, propaganda was both privately and publicly being spread throughout the population. The ground was being made ready for the battle of the following years.

The gradualness of everything, however, might easily be forgotten here when we are looking back at these years from the point of view of the man at the centre. It must always be borne in mind that a considerable proportion of the Irish people not only did not succumb now, but never succumbed to the appeal of Sinn Fein. Most of the older generation remained sceptical to the end. The core of those who had for years followed the Irish Parliamentary Party were willing to retire, but not to change over. Business people, the Big House people (who normally cared nothing at all about politics, in any case, being interested only in sport), those with connections in England, a mass of the poor and semi-educated who are the dead-weight of every revolutionary movement, were all as yet uncaptured by the Sinn Feiners. Just at this point we, happily, run into a General Election—the first since the War—and the figures give us a good indication of the relative strength of Sinn Fein at the end of 1918. Out of one hundred and six seats the Separatists got seventy-three. These were seventy-three members of parliament pledged not to attend Westminster, in other words Abstentionists. Of the seventy-three, thirty-six, including De Valera, were in jail. Three more were deported. Six were—to use a phrase that circumstances made increasingly popular—"on the run", i.e. from police attention. It

was a striking victory when we also take into account the difficulties under which Sinn Fein as an illegal organization had to labour during this election.

This time the aims of Sinn Fein were stated with greater definition. The immediate aim was to make an appeal to the Peace Conference. The ultimate aim was to establish an Irish Republic. The method was, in the first place, a negative method—Abstentionism, or refusal to attend Westminster; and in the second place, more vaguely, to "make use of every and any means available to render impotent the power of England to hold Ireland in subjection." Later the Die-hard Republicans maintained that this election committed the people to a Republic and nothing but a republic, and they defined the word in its most extreme sense. There can be no question but that the people who voted for Sinn Fein did for the most part vote for that symbol. There can be little doubt that for the most part they visualised it, ingenuously, as a form of absolute dissociation from the British connection. Had it been defined for them in terms of the Articles of Agreement which established the Irish Free State in 1922, there is considerable doubt as to what their reaction would have been. After all, when those Articles of Agreement came before the representatives of the people, four years after that General Election of 1918, they argued about them day in and day out for a whole month before, by a small majority, they agreed to accept them.

De Valera's personal election address at that date is not available. Had he been free and in a position to control affairs it would be interesting to know how far he would have committed himself, and his Party. The

fact remains that he was returned for two constituencies, East Mayo and East Clare, under the published manifesto and that from that date on he was the leader of a Republican movement. The I.R.B. had, so far, won its point, but De Valera was to feel strongly, in later times, the pinch of "the straight-jacket of the Republic" into which they had buckled him. On the other hand he was thereby erected before his people as the symbol of their proudest traditions. That symbol, in his keeping, was to prove his greatest asset as a national leader.

4

January, 1919, saw the setting up of a rival Westminster in Ireland, the first Dáil Eireann. It was attended by only twenty-seven members. It read and passed a Declaration of Independence, a Message to the Free Nations of the World, and a Democratic Programme. (For these documents the reader may conveniently consult *The Irish Republic*, by Dorothy MacArdle, an invaluable guide through the maze of the period. It is written from the Republican point of view). Almost simultaneously with this political epiphany one of the first armed attacks by the Volunteers, or I.R.A., occurred in Tipperary where Dan Breen, later to become famous as one of the most determined guerilla fighters, shot two of an armed police guard and seized a quantity of explosives. Both sides of the movement were thus in full action and the leader, with full responsibility on his shoulders, was behind prison bars in Lincoln, powerless to interfere. All he could do for the moment was to plan for the future. He made up his mind that if he once got free he would go to America as the representative

leader of the Irish people, both to raise money for a National Loan and voice the Irish cause. A Presidential election was due in America and with the aid of the Irish population, notoriously powerful in State and Federal politics, there was a fair chance of bringing Ireland's cause to the forefront, and thereby into the general arena of international politics.

It was not, then, of himself alone that he was thinking as he entered the sacristy of the prison chapel one morning and fingered the keys of the chaplain. There was, the prisoners knew, a peculiar gate in one of the walls which seemed to give egress to the outside world. It was the work of a moment, as he lit the candles for Mass, to press some of the warm wax into his palm and to take on it an impression of the operative key. The problem now was to get the impression out and a facsimile key in. The prisoners hit on a bold device, the possible success of which depended on the astuteness of their friends. One of them drew a comic postcard headed *Christmas*, 1917—*Christmas*, 1919, on one side showing a drunken man trying to fit his key into the hall door, and wailing, "I can't get in!"; and on the other side the same man in jail, with an enormous key in his hand (carefully copied from the wax-impression of the chaplain's key), wailing, "I can't get out." The card passed out safely, and in due course reached Michael Collins who at once seized on the point, and smuggled a facsimile key into Lincoln. It did not work. Another, and yet another key was sent in, but they would not work. They were sent in baked into cakes, presents which the prisoners were entitled to receive. Finally blank keys, and tools for cutting them into shape, were smuggled in, and at the same time

Collins laid the most elaborate plans for the transportation of the prisoners to safety in Manchester once he got them outside the prison walls. (The best detailed record of this escape, which is mainly due to the meticulous organising ability of Collins, will be found in Piaras Beaslaoi's authoritative biography, *Michael Collins*. Another account is in Desmond Ryan's life of De Valera, *Unique Dictator*. After several exasperating postponements, and last-minute strokes of luck, the escape took place successfully on February 3rd, 1919. It received an enormous publicity, and to cover up their chagrin the Government decided to release all the prisoners, and announced to the press correspondents that it had actually been no more than a subtle way of getting rid of an embarrassing prisoner who would, in fact, be more useful outside as a restraining influence.

The immediate result of the escape was that De Valera was now once more in a position of control. At a second session of the Dáil, held in secret, as most of these sessions were to be held, and most other such work done, from that to the Truce, he was elected President, and nominated a full cabinet. He appointed Griffith to Home Affairs, Count Plunkett to Foreign Affairs, Countess Markievicz to Labour, Professor MacNeill as Minister for Industry, William Cosgrave as Minister for Local Government, Michael Collins for Finance, Robert Barton for Agriculture, and Laurence Ginnell to Propaganda. Cathal Brugha became Minister for Defence, and Richard Mulcahy became Chief of Staff of the I.R.A.

A certain amount of all this was unrealistic. The various ministries were able to direct only the willing

followers of Sinn Fein, and through the I.R.A. some of the unwilling who were not Sinn Feiners. The chief effect, as usual, was the symbolic effect; it also gave an opportunity to some of these men to think out in part the possibilities of Ireland under a native government. But, in effect, as the screw became tighter and tighter, they effected less and less, and the burden of the struggle fell on Collins, and the I.R.A. Indeed, as far as active leadership at home was concerned, from May, 1919 through the whole of 1920, the thing became a one-man fight, with Collins putting his finger, or better say his fist, into every pie, driving everybody before him like a whirlwind, burning himself out in his terrific lust for action. For De Valera was, during that year and a half, fighting the political fight in America, establishing himself more and more firmly as the symbol of all Irish aspirations—which, as we shall see again and again, is the true secret of his power to-day.

5

For 1919–1920 the Irish struggle is thus divided between Ireland and the United States.

At home things got hotter and hotter, until gradually the country found itself living in the middle of a wearing guerilla warfare, waged along the country roads, or on the hills, or in the streets of the towns and cities, until every day became a separate ordeal. In America, from June 1919 to December 1920, De Valera was rousing the millions of Irish exiles to support the fight at home, addressing vast audiences from coast to coast, collecting money, awakening the entire country to Ireland's claims, attempting to lever American public

opinion against Great Britain. In those eighteen months he must have travelled anything up to, and perhaps over, ten thousand miles, and those who observed him discovered what everybody acknowledges to-day—the man's immense energy and persistence. During all that exhausting period he worked sixteen hours a day. Collins' energy was a whirlwind. De Valera's is tough, insistent, penetrating, implacable, prevailing.

The American tour was De Valera's first introduction to international politics, and he could not have chosen a more severe test. He had three main objects in view. He was in America as publicist and propagandist. He was there to get financial assistance from the exiled Irish. And he hoped to use the Irish vote in American politics to gain official American recognition of the Irish Republic, declared in 1916, and supported by the election of 1918 and the first Dáil of 1919, of which he was President.

Of these aims the last was the most ambitious, and it seemed fore-doomed to failure. That does not in the least mean that De Valera was an unpractical dreamer. The general atmosphere of international politics then was far different to what it is now. The Great War was over. Versailles was supposed to be settling for ever all national injustices, especially those of the small nations. There was a tremendous feeling of optimism and general philanthropy abroad—part the result of victory, part a natural, permanent element in the American temper, part a hang-over, or recrudescence, of the pre-war hopes for a brave new world to be engineered with the help of all-knowing scientists and wholly intelligent statesmen, combining good-will with wisdom for the "intelligent control" (John Dewey's

phrase) of human nature. Wilson belonged to that generation of pre-war optimists—as does H. G. Wells and Walter Lippmann, and many others who expressed it and outlived it, though it did not finally die until Hitler began to make hay of its first and last magnificent gesture, the League of Nations. It was therefore not only natural for a country like Ireland to hope for something from that hopeful spirit, but it was by no means beyond the bounds of practical politics that Ireland might in fact, as easily profit by it as some of the small nations on the continent which did, if not permanently, profit by it. (Writing in 1939 of the results of Versailles nobody can avoid the qualification of possible temporariness.) Even if, all told, it was still a tremendous thing to hope that America would throw her weight against Great Britain, there was some small precedent for it, though I do not know if it was quoted at the time. A former President of the United States, Tyler (1841–1845) had written to the Irish leader of the time, Daniel O'Connell: "I am the decided friend of the Repeal of the Union between Great Britain and Ireland. I ardently and anxiously hope that it may take place, and I have the utmost confidence that Ireland will have her own Parliament in her own capital in a very short time. On this great question I am no half-way man."

To extract any such statement from President Wilson would have been a tremendous triumph. The most the Irish in our day managed to secure was a resolution which the United States Senate passed in June, 1919, i.e., before De Valera's arrival. It read :—

"That the Senate of the United States earnestly requests the American Peace Commission at Versailles

to endeavour to secure for Eamonn de Valera, Arthur Griffith, and George Noble Count Plunkett, a hearing before the Peace Conference in order that they may present the case of Ireland. And, further, the Senate of the United States expresses its sympathy with the aspirations of the Irish people for a Government of their own choice."

It had no effect. President Wilson explained that the famous Committee of Four (the counterpart of the Metternich-Talleyrand-Castlereagh combination at the Congress of Vienna) had agreed that no small nation could come before it without the *unanimous* agreement of all four members. Ireland was thus one of the first small nations to unmask the swindle of Versailles, just as Bolivia and Venezuela exposed the similar follies of the Holy Alliance one hundred years before.

De Valera, in America, walked into local American politics as well as into international politics. He found the Irish interest, best represented by the organisation called The Friends of Irish Freedom, divided into two camps. (For a detailed record see *With De Valera in America*, by Dr. Patrick McCartan.) One powerful group, led by Judge Cohalan and the old Fenian John Devoy, who between them virtually controlled the Irish vote, worked and thought mainly as American citizens who happened to hate England, and who were keen to use all the strength at their disposal directly towards hampering England from America. The other group, led by Joe McGarrity, were apparently nearer to the Irish struggle at home, and were keen to aid and abet it in every way. The bitter and even sordid squabbles that eventually broke out between De Valera and the

Devoy-Cohalan section seem, however, to have originated in temperamental differences, before they were consolidated by a tactical blunder on the part of De Valera. That was when he declared in an interview to the *Westminster Gazette* and the *New York Globe* that if Great Britain merely wished to safeguard her own interests she could apply to Ireland a stipulation similar to that whereby the United States had safeguarded *her* interests in relation to Cuba. That stipulation was to the effect that Cuba should never enter into compacts with other powers which might impair her own independence, nor allow any foreign power to get a lodgement in Cuba—in other words, that Cuba should not at any time be used as a base against the United States.

These "Cuban Proposals" infuriated Devoy and Cohalan. They meant, Devoy said, that the Irish Republic was not to be an independent Irish Republic, but a virtual ally of England. What else Devoy said, in addition, had best be imagined, for he was the most scurrilous journalist in the States, and when once he took out his dictionary of epithets the air stank. We may, however, at this distance of time note the proposals more calmly, and note that De Valera never renounced the solution he then proposed for an amicable association with Great Britain.

He was evidently foreseeing certain natural (one might almost say "geographical") difficulties in the relationship of the two islands, and trying to speculate how—to use the words of Mr. Lloyd George in his final invitation to a discussion in 1921—"the association of Ireland with the community of nations known as the British Empire may best be reconciled with Irish national aspirations." It apparently began to seem evident

to him that some such association would always exist. If Ireland agreed to it, subsequent to her liberation, obviously nobody could object: a free people can make what treaty it wishes with whom it pleases. Having a peculiarly discriminating, semi-theological mind, it likewise did not seem to him—one ventures to conclude—that it made much difference if Ireland, while not agreeing before its liberation to any such treaty of association, mentioned, so to speak, that it would probably be willing to make it afterwards. Thus reassured England would buy a pig in a poke, and on opening the poke be delighted to find that the pig really was inside. In other words, England, thus reassured, would grant Ireland her independence and then find that Ireland was most eager to make an alliance with her.

One cannot help but regard this Cuban interlude with some amusement. It illustrates De Valera's mental processes rather well, and indicates that if one does not take these mental processes with some reservation of seriousness the alternative is to be infuriated by them beyond all measure. The Cohalan-Devoy clique, unaccustomed to such a mixture of ingenuousness and disingenuousness, was infuriated. They thereby met a quality in De Valera which has ever since caused considerable pain to all but his most ardent admirers—the capacity for something perilously near sharp dealing, with a bland air of utter innocence, even self-righteousness. I can find no other word for the source of this curious quality but the word I have already used—a theological turn of mind. (Francis Hackett once aptly hit De Valera off as "a lay priest".) What it amounts to is a power of self-dissociation—i.e. of dissociating one's self from all responsibility for mental reservations;

or, indeed, a power of dissociating one's self by means of mental reservations from the responsibility of what one is actually doing. Thus, at that very first public example he gave of his love of formulæ—the formula of the aims of Sinn Fein which was to please both the Right and the Left, he had said :

> Sinn Fein aims at securing international recognition of Ireland as an Independent Irish Republic.
>
> (*The Left is pleased and applauds*).
>
> Having achieved this status the Irish people may, by referendum, freely choose their own form of Government.
>
> (*The Right is pleased and applauds.*)

This is what might vulgarly be called a double-shuffle. Again, when he had been in America only a week or so, he found that the Cohalan-Devoy group, for some reason, preferred to work for Ireland's "Right to Self-Determination"—possibly because the Irish cause had a better chance of being supported generally under the more vague term—whereas others wished to aim at "Recognition of the Irish Republic." De Valera's first public statement said:—

> From to-day I am in America as the official head of the Republic established by the will of the Irish people (*Left*) in accordance with the principle of Self-Determination (*Right*).

I do not think any Irishman can afford to blame De Valera for this kind of thing. It is precisely the

mentality of Dan O'Connell, the first native Irish leader. It is rooted in the national genius, which adores reservations, loop-holes, wordy discrimination, postulation, conjecture, surmise, hypothesis, academic supposition—anything on earth and under heaven except a clear statement of simple fact or intent. To the Irish artist, to the foreign visitor, to anybody not involved, this trait is hilariously amusing. But to people like Judge Cohalan, trained by American life, or to a man like Arthur Griffith, by nature decisive and anyway of mixed blood, it was an experience either to make a man weep, or, as old John Devoy did more than once while De Valera was in America, dance on his hat. It made Lloyd George, who was certainly no mean hand at the game himself, raise his two hands to heaven in despair. He said that to argue with De Valera was like chasing a man on a merry-go-round while seated on the horse behind him. (Which, from Mr. Lloyd George, is pretty good.)

If another often-told story is to be believed—I do not vouch for it—old, cynical, Cardinal Logue was not long in saying his say on that side of De Valera's character. In his rich country brogue he would (according to the story) recount the meeting between the Bishops in conference at Maynooth in April, 1918, at the time of the threat of Conscription. "Misther De Valera," he would narrate, "got up, and he spoke to their Lordships. He went on for a while. And then he sthopped. And he began again, and he sthopped again. And then he began again, and he sthopped. And this time he sthopped for good. But before he began I told their Lordships that when Misther De Valera was finished they could ask him any questions they wished. So

when he sat down I asked their Lordships if they wanted to put any question to Misther De Valera, but they didn't. So I said, 'Misther De Valera, would you be willing to accept Dominion Home Rule?' And he sthopped, and he said, 'Yes.' Now, the extraordinary thing about it all is that their Lordships didn't understhand wan word Misther De Valera said to them. And I only understood one word he said, and that was 'Yes'. So I took it he meant 'No!' and I thanked him. And he went away."

There is only one essential comment to make about this kind of mind, and it is one which this biographer found implicit in the use made of it by Daniel O'Connell —that it requires a purpose of the most insistent nature to hold it together, or it disintegrates all character. Remove from the typical "Jesuit" mind its strict training and religious intention, from O'Connell the unambiguous, unequivocal needs of his people, from De Valera the ultimately simple and transpicuous aim of Irish political independence, and you find yourself in the presence of intellectual and moral obscurity. The Celtic mind is over-subtilised, and without that strict training and that clear object, if it has often amused its observers it has also only too frequently disgusted them by its inconsequential perambulations, divagations, and indecisions. (It can hardly be necessary to recall that some modern European statesmen have their share of political ambiguity.)

It is granted to De Valera, by almost all his critics, that he showed considerable tact in his public speeches. He was probably not so tactful in his private relationships. A proud man like Judge Cohalan was not likely to submit easily to anything in the nature of fiiggling

interference or dictatorial methods. An incident illustrates. When the differences between Devoy and De Valera had gone to the limit Cohalan brought matters to a head by replying sharply to a letter which De Valera addressed to him. In that letter De Valera had ventured to protest:—

> I see added force being applied day by day to the power end of the great lever of American public opinion with which I hope to accomplish my purpose. I must satisfy myself as to the temper at the other end of the lever.

There was more in the same tone, and it was a tone which goes far to suggest the strain under which he was living at the time. Cohalan's reply contained a few phrases which make the position clear :—

> I have no appointment from you or from any other spokesman for another country, nor would I under any circumstances accept one. . . .
>
> What I have done for the cause of the independence of the Irish people recently and for many years past I have done as an American whose only allegiance is to America. . . .
>
> Are you not in great danger of making a grave mistake when you talk in your communication of selecting "instruments" in this country, and of "levers", and "power end", and ,"other end of lever" through which you hope to accomplish your purpose here? Do you really think for a moment that any self-respecting American will permit any citizen of another country to interfere as you suggest in American affairs?

A letter containing such sentences makes clear that the difference was by now irreconcilable. "Big as America is," De Valera let slip, on one occasion, "it is not big enough to hold Judge Cohalan and myself." The two ceased to work together.

It may be as well to finish here with the effort to obtain recognition of the Irish Republic. De Valera's hope was that either or both the great parties would insert a resolution in their manifestoes to this effect in order to secure the Irish-American vote. In June, 1920, the Republican Party held its convention in Chicago, and both Cohalan and De Valera took up residence in separate quarters in the city, and the usual lobbying began. The essential clause of the resolution which De Valera caused to be put before the Convention ran :—

> Therefore we favour the according by our Government to the elected Government of the Republic of Ireland full formal and official recognition . . .

Judge Cohalan had an alternative resolution which asked for recognition of the . . .

> principle that the people of Ireland have the right to determine freely, without dictation from outside, their own government, institutions, and international relations with other states and peoples.

The two leaders would not agree on a common resolution. De Valera's was defeated. Cohalan's was accepted. De Valera publicly repudiated the Cohalan resolution and it was withdrawn, so that in neither Party's plank was there any reference at all to Ireland.

Somehow it all makes rather wearisome reading

to-day, this squabbling between two big men who could not agree. The best comment is that attributed to De Valera himself: he is reported to have told his colleagues when he came home—"If I were President of the United States, I would not and could not recognise the Irish Republic." If De Valera *did* say that it is one of the most amazing things he ever said. It is not amazing merely because he had spent the better part of a year trying for the impossible, or because Cohalan was right to have tried for what was possible, a recognition of the general principle of self-determination. It is amazing because we may be assured that De Valera would nevertheless stoutly maintain that Cohalan was wrong, on the ground that such a pious resolution about self-determination was not "worth while". It had, perhaps, best be left at that.

In his other two objects, publicity and the collection of funds, he was entirely and beyond all his hopes successful. It suffices to quote the hard fact that when the Irish External Republican Loan was launched by him in America he put the limit at ten million dollars. That is more eloquent than any amount of descriptions about the immense and hysterically enthusiastic concourses he addressed all over the States. It may be said, in addition, that America subscribed generously in many other ways to the Irish revolutionary cause. He continued this double work all through 1920, and then was quietly smuggled back to Ireland, where he landed on Christmas Day.

6

When he landed in Ireland the "Troubles," as the Anglo-Irish struggle was euphemistically called, were at

their height. What had happened in his absence is that the Irish Republican Army had come under the Dáil, as represented by the Minister for Defence, and had with the full approval and command of its G.H.Q. opened a species of guerilla war on the Crown forces, until attacks on barracks became more and more frequent, raids for arms, ambushes on a large or small scale. Lord French was ambushed, but escaped under a hail of bullets, at the end of 1919. By January, the Black and Tans were already being organised in Great Britain, and by February the most nerve-racking feature of the terror had come into being—namely the Curfew. At first from midnight, then from ten o'clock, and in some places like Cork City, at one stage, as early as five o'clock in the afternoon, every living soul was required to be indoors, so that as soon as dusk descended the civilian population was wholly at the mercy of the military and police. The nights thereafter became horrible with rifle-fire and the slow, ominous tramp of marching patrols. No man knew when those steps might not halt at his door, and then. . . His wife and children might be awakened by furious knocking. They might hear the door being opened. They might then hear a crash of revolver bullets and the screams of a dying man.

It may be thought that this is to exaggerate? Nothing can resuscitate the full meaning of the Terror. In March, 1920, the Lord Mayor of Cork, Thomas MacCurtain, was thus awakened from his sleep, and murdered in the presence of his wife and children by policemen with blackened faces. On the other hand Dublin was horrified when Alan Bell, an elderly Civil Servant, who had been commissioned to smash the National Loan,

was taken from a tram near Ballsbridge and shot in broad daylight. In April over three hundred abandoned Royal Irish Constabulary barracks were burned in a single night; and almost every Income Tax Office in the country was either raided and put effectively out of action, or destroyed by fire. But this was only a preliminary.

The Black and Tans came next. These English-recruited allies of the Royal Irish Constabulary were to be seen for the first time that summer moving about the country. They had been so hastily recruited that they first appeared in khaki trousers and the black jackets of the police—whence their name. They began, in the words of their own official paper, to make Ireland "an appropriate hell for rebels." On August 12th, 1920, MacCurtain's successor, Terence McSwiney, was arrested and began a hunger-strike which lasted for well over two months—seventy-five days in all of slow starvation.

Collins all this time was honeycombing the Secret Service. The value of his work to the revolutionary movement cannot be measured. How one man and a few helpers, all on the run, harried by the police, working in secret, was able to smash the Intelligence of Dublin Castle is, perhaps, the most extraordinary and gripping story of all this period. One regretfully leaves this aspect of the revolution (again recommending the reader to O'Connor's *The Big Fellow*, or Beaslaoi's *Life*) noting only the most spectacular and bloody of his raids when on Sunday, 21st November, 1920, members of the I.R.A. swooped on a nest of British Intelligence officers in Dublin and shot down fourteen of them. Collins was satisfied that they represented a deliberate policy of "authorized murder"; he had noted that in the month previous seventeen of his men

had been taken out and shot. Those who may still have any doubts about the existence of such a secret yet official "murder-gang" must go to the evidence in the books I have referred to, or to the late General Crozier's revelations in his *Ireland for Ever* (where he says, "Wilson was responsible for the first sub rosa murder-gang run by the military in 1920.") But it is doubtful if, at this date, anybody needs persuading as to the methods adopted against the revolutionaries, or if presuming that they are still unconvinced anything can persuade them. Yet it is possible that some still doubt. I note that when Ernie O'Malley, one of the leading officers of the I.R.A., published his reminiscences, *On Another Man's Wound*, two years ago, the portion in which he described his experiences in Dublin Castle as a prisoner was suppressed. His boots had been removed by the Auxiliaries (ex-officers all of them, and to do them justice acknowledged by the I.R.A. as plucky fighters), and men broke his toes by stamping on them. He was jabbed with bayonets, beaten in the face, half choked, and a red-hot poker was held to his eyes in the effort to make him speak. His case was one of hundreds. If one were to launch on a recital of the brutalities and the secret murders for which the Government was responsible in that and the following year this book would swell to three times its size. They will be found, literally *ad nauseam*, in Miss MacArdle's *The Irish Republic*.

I only refer to them here, in passing, to indicate the state to which affairs had come when De Valera returned to Ireland. They may be summed up by the statement issued, as early as the autumn of 1920, by the Irish Hierarchy assembled at Maynooth:

> On a scale truly appalling have to be reckoned countless indiscriminate raids and arrests in the darkness of the night, prolonged imprisonments without trial, savage sentences from tribunals that command and deserve no confidence, the burning of houses, town-halls, creameries, and crops, the destruction of industries to pave the way for want and famine—by men maddened by drink and bent on loot—the flogging and massacre of civilians, all perpetrated by the forces of the Crown, who have established a reign of frightfulness which, for murdering the innocent and destroying their property, has a parallel only in the horrors of Turkish atrocities or in the outrages of the Red Army in Bolshevik Russia.

And the Irish bishops form as conservative a body of men as may be found in any country.

Through 1920 the thing went on increasing in tempo, an increase which lends itself to one effective form of measurement—the increase in the numbers of British forces employed against the I.R.A. When General Macready took over command in April, 1920, he had had under his orders two divisions, or about 20,000 men—which is about three times the size of the normal Irish regular army, and equals the normal total of all the Irish defence force, volunteers, regulars, and reserves. By August Macready had the strength of four divisions or forty-six battalions. By December he had fifty-one battalions and six cavalry regiments and, by a date a little later, one hundred and four armoured cars, Peerless or Rolls Royce, and an unknown number of lighter patrol cars. In addition there were the Black and Tans, and the regular armed police, official and

unofficial C.I.D. agents, and a number of other unclassified agents, which must have brought the total of Government forces up to, at least, 50,000 men. In Dublin, alone, which so swarmed with these that one could not walk from one end of Dame Street or Grafton Street to the other without rubbing shoulders against scores of them, there were, at no time, more than eighty *regular* I.R.A. fighting-men.

No record, however brief, of this time would be complete without some emphasis on the way the struggle weighed on the civil population. In many ways these suffered most. To-day, years after, there must be many to whom a sudden back-fire in the street at night must bring back in one rush all the tense nervousness of that time. Even a Civic Guard quietly testing a lock on a door can evoke, to-day, a picture of a city so deserted, in such utter darkness—for the street-lamps were not lit at night in many places by order of a recalcitrant local council or corporation—that, were it not for those patrols and those sudden shots, it might be a city of the dead. The imagination recalls how a silent Lancia car would pour its searchlight along the face of the houses, seeking in every doorway or alley-mouth for the figure of some crouching "gunman." That eerie silence is smashed by the distant rattle of a machine-gun. Then all becomes quiet again.

Probably the easiest way to say what conditions of general living were like is to say that nobody was free of chance danger. At any moment this sporadic warfare might burst out in a crackle of firing at one's elbow. It might be all over in a minute, and in a scatter of feet, pedestrians frozen where they stood unable to realise what was happening, then dissolving back into normalcy

with a hysteria of laughter. Or it might, on the other hand, go on for hours, and then one took devious routes home, and every street-corner became a risk. For by 1921 the most wearing feature of this guerilla war had come into being—street ambushes.

These were most common in Dublin, the size of which lent itself to the surprise attack and quick get-away. Collins had here organized a regular flying column of fighting-men of his own, known as The Squad, while the I.R.A. had its own Active Service Unit; mostly taken from their normal occupation, given a regular salary both to compensate them and to make it easier for them to keep their real profession more or less secret. Sometimes they went out on chance, more generally on the information Collins had got by tapping British Intelligence. As far as the public and the Crown forces were concerned the result was an endless series of surprise attacks in the open streets.

A lorry-load of Auxiliaries or Tans was the usual objective. A young man might be gazing innocently into a shop-window as the lorry zoomed down the street; as it came abreast of him he would whirl and fling a bomb. His comrades who, five seconds before, had all the appearance of innocent citizens, would whip out their automatics or their long-nosed Webleys and work their trigger-fingers feverishly for a matter of seconds, then dashing for cover down side-alleys or side-streets, trusting to the confusion and their intimate knowledge of the city to get safely away. Inevitably, civilian casualties were inseparable from this kind of attack, which the I.R.A. had been permitted to engage in only after long debate on the part of the Dáil Cabinet and the I.R.A. Headquarters, and after the terror had

gone so far and become so acute, that the rules of war had become non-existent. It is the inevitable end of guerilla warfare. It becomes a lawless and savage duel between rage and revenge, so that if anybody wants to form a picture of the probable tenor of life later in Palestine, or in India, during a similar struggle he need only cast his mind back to Ireland in 1920 and 1921.

Country life was equally filled with discomfort and danger. Roads were torn up by the I.R.A. to hinder the military, bridges blown up, trees felled. Several railway lines ceased to function. Villages became next to isolated. Reprisals were sanctioned by the military, so that if an ambush occurred near a farmhouse it stood a fair chance of being blown up by the order of the local officer in command of the troops. All this was borne by the civilian population with hardly a murmur of complaint against the I.R.A. No monument will ever be erected to them, or ever is erected to the non-combatants in time of war, but they earned it—hard.

Such was the state of the country from December, 1920, to June, 1921, when the Truce was declared. During that year and a half De Valera was in Dublin working as best he could under conditions of complete secrecy as President-elect of the Dáil, and the acknowledged and responsible leader of the fight. For his hiding-place one must imagine one of those tall Georgian houses which make Dublin such a pleasant city to look at, situated in Upper Mount Street, a semi-fashionable residential street off Merrion Square. At the end is a graceful church, facing down the quiet street. Behind it is the canal. On either side of him were the homes of respected professional men, one of whom at least

was unaware that on the other side of his fireplace wall sat one of the most badly-wanted men in the British Isles. Like most such houses it had its own secret hiding-place and it happened at least once that, during one of those routine and somewhat perfunctory raids which the military carried out at the time, the raiders passed near enough to have heard him breathe. Occasionally an important foreign journalist would be driven about Dublin for half an hour and then led by the hand to the door and into one of the finely proportioned rooms that are the attraction of these old houses. There he would set eyes on the "President of the Republic," his face pale from incarceration, overwork, responsibility and worry.

His duties were widespread. He had to try, first of all, to keep a cool, consistent head. He had to supervise the work of the various departments of Dáil Eireann, especially the work of its foreign representatives; and, at home of the Sinn Fein courts, propaganda, finance—all by despatch and courier. He could rarely go out himself and then only on government work, to meet his colleagues, never for so trifling an excuse as a breath of air. Nobody who has not worked under these conditions can imagine the strain. The old Italian motto, *Cor ne edito*!—Eat not thy Heart out!—might be written over the door of such a house.

From April, 1920, in addition to his "normal" work, he had to watch the peace-feelers which were being sent out from Great Britain by public men disgusted with the whole Black and Tan misadventure; or from the Government, which was now beginning to feel the pressure of foreign disapproval. There had been one such feeler in January, 1920, when Archbishop Clune,

of Perth, saw Collins and Griffith, with the consent of Mr. Lloyd George. Nothing came of it and Sinn Fein felt that it was merely a manœuvre that had best be disregarded. In April, Lord Derby came to Dublin and met De Valera. General Smuts came later. Mr. Arthur Cope, Assistant Under-Secretary at the Castle, was the last of these envoys and the first practical one. He was a believer in Ireland's right to self-government, and from May, 1921, when Mr. Lloyd George seems to have decided that it would be best to confer with Sinn Fein, he worked patiently to bring an end to the bitter relations that had divided the two islands for so many years. While these moves towards peace were going on under the surface the warfare continued its intensity. The last big gesture by the I.R.A. was the total destruction of the Dublin Custom House, which contained among other offices those of Inland Revenue. As it went up in smoke a running battle ensued between the I.R.A. and the Crown forces who killed and wounded about eighteen and arrested eighty of the general Dublin Brigade.

In spite of the many overtures to peace the end took everybody by surprise. De Valera most of all. On June 22nd military raiding a house in Blackrock arrested on suspicion a man whom they did not recognise. He was taken to the Castle, to the dismay of Cope, who felt that all his plans for peace would be ruined by this arrest. Cope secured his release—much to the astonishment of the prisoner. On June 25th, while he was still wondering what this move implied, he received a letter from Lloyd George proposing a conference in London in company with Sir James Craig to explore the possibility of a settlement.

He asked for and was granted the release of his colleagues in jail, and with them met General Macready on July 8th to arrange terms for a Truce. These were duly agreed upon and at twelve midday, July 11th 1921, quietness settled on the country for the time being.

Here opens a new period in the life of De Valera, and one which belongs more to the contemporary man. The struggle had been, in large part, taken out of his hands by the soldiers in 1920 and 1921. From this on, with the interruption of the Civil War which broke out between Right and Left in the Summer of 1922, it comes back to the control, or partial control, of the politicians. In the intervening year, from the Truce in the summer of 1921, the future of Ireland hung in the balance of uncertainty.

From July 14th to September 30th, 1921, De Valera and Lloyd George were manœuvring for position before any actual conference took place. On the Irish side, De Valera, warned possibly by the fracas over the "Cuban Proposals" was trying to meet without prejudice to the absolute Irish claim to sovereign independence. Lloyd George, on his side, very naturally had no wish to admit in advance that which the proposed conference was intended to debate. Finally, after what seemed an endless exchange of views a formula was found which committed nobody to anything and the Irish Delegates crossed to London on October 9th.

7

The history of the prolonged efforts to reach a settlement has been told by Frank Pakenham in *Peace by*

Ordeal. It is an enormous book, and an enormous book is needed to disentangle all the forces that were at work. Here we can only have the briefest summary of these discussions which clarified, eventually, modern Anglo-Irish political relationships.

First it must be noted that De Valera did not go as a Delegate, and that Arthur Griffith took his place as head of the Delegation. Subsequently much discussion took place with regard to the powers of these delegates, and De Valera was much blamed for not leading them himself. To that discussion there is no end. Their credentials signed by De Valera nominated them "envoys plenipotentiary from the elected government of the Republic of Ireland to negotiate and conclude on behalf of Ireland . . . a treaty or treaties of settlement, etc." However they also received instructions in writing which bound them to report to the Cabinet in Dublin before a major decision was reached, and which agreed also that the complete text would be presented to Dublin before a Treaty was signed. This promise was only half kept. The Delegation also received a copy of a Draft Treaty on which to work. It visualized the recognition by England of Ireland as a sovereign and independent state, with guaranteed neutrality, but in "external association" with the Commonwealth of Nations.

This phrase "external association" crops up here for the first time, but was to be heard again and again for years after, and is to the present day De Valera's solution for all remaining difficulties that may exist in Anglo-Irish relationships.

The clearest definition we seem to get of "external association" is the proposal of the Irish delegates about

three weeks after the meetings with the British representatives began, that a free and undivided Ireland would "for the purposes of the association recognize the Crown as the symbol and accepted head of the combination of signatory states." This did not, certainly at this date, involve allegiance to the Crown as Head of the British Empire or Commonwealth of Nations of which the proposed free Ireland would be part. It involved recognition of the precedence of the Crown in a restricted association between the Commonwealth of Nations on the one hand, and Ireland on the other—the association being restricted by the implicit insistence by Ireland on its own sovereignty.

Somebody once said that De Valera drew a little diagram to illustrate this. I have not the slightest reason to think he did, but the diagram does help to suggest the implications of the proposed solution.

To the lay mind the only difference between such an association and an ordinary alliance is that Ireland does not insist on absolute equality but recognizes the Crown as taking precedence, without, however, granting it authority. About a month later, when the question of the Crown became acute and De Valera was informed by the Delegates that there must be an oath of allegiance, he proposed a draft of an acceptable oath in the following terms:—

> I do swear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of Ireland and to the Treaty of Association of Ireland and the British Commonwealth of Nations, and to recognize the King of Great Britain as Head of the Association. . . .

This does not, yet, involve allegiance to the Crown, nor even a promise to be faithful to it, and to what it represents—which is, in effect, the British Parliament and the British Empire. It merely involves "recognition" of the precedence of the Crown, which is about as much as to recognize the precedence of a Chairman of a committee of freely associated individuals. Great Britain, through her representatives, on the other hand, insisted that an "association" is not enough; that the Commonwealth of Nations is not a form of international organisation, where each Dominion is free and equal; but that, on the contrary, each Dominion, though it may be equal to another, is not equal in status or in rights to Great Britain, and that Great Britain by virtue of her superiority claims allegiance in all things from her inferior partners. That is what the idea of the Crown, and of Allegiance, means in brutal terms.

What De Valera, and at this stage all the Delegates, wanted was that Ireland's sovereignty should be admitted, and that she would then enter into a free alliance with Great Britain and the other Dominions. Allegiance to the Crown the Irish delegates would not yield, because that would derogate from the sovereignty of their people.

Why this External Association, which is tantamount to an Alliance, should not have been spoken of in terms of an Alliance is obvious enough. The situation may be summed up thus, in that regard:—

(*a*) From the Irish viewpoint to embody a pre-arranged Alliance in a Treaty which it was hoped would confer sovereign status, was to barter beforehand something of that independence which sovereign status confers.

(*b*) If, however, sovereign status would be conferred without any form of qualification, definitely and finally, an Alliance, or for that matter an "Association" was acceptable.

(*c*) But this matter of sovereign status was precisely what was in question in the debates, and Great Britain had no desire to admit it. And it would admit it, instantly, to speak of an Alliance—which is something made between two sovereign states.

(*d*) The British insisted, rather, that Ireland might have self-government, but that she could *not* have sovereign status. She must remain confessedly inferior, and swear allegiance to the Crown, the Empire, and the Parliament. Hence the idea of an Alliance was intolerable, and the masking word Association was no better.

To those who have no regard for the symbol, self-government may seem all that any country may desire in the way of political freedom. (And there we may see, possibly, why De Valera was not keen on Judge Cohalan's formula of Self-Determination.) To a proud people like the Irish, an ancient race, with a strong democratic sense, it was, and is still, inconceivable that any people, any Dominion, can admit the superiority of any other country in regard to itself, and by swearing allegiance to the symbol of that superiority admit itself of lower status. To the Irish people the Empire means the result of colonial expansion by brute force. assuaged in latter years, for the more distant parts of the Empire, by an awareness of mutual profit in the connection, and a feeling of virtual independence of it: even as a boy, reared in captivity, might grow up to be equal in strength to his master, and both think each indispensable to the other, and because of the youth's actual freedom of movement, and sense of power, he never adverts to the loss of human dignity in his title, or that he is still in a state of mental thraldom, and still in all the more subtle ways of life under the influence of his captor. In that way Ireland to this day regards such Dominions as Canada, and Australia, and even New Zealand, and their protestations do not impress her because they have never given sign of independent nationality in those ways in which free nations demonstrate their individuality—in the arts, in language, in politics, religion, or world outlook. South Africa she watches with interest because there the admixture of another race has produced a sense of separate identity. But she looks, in admiration, on America which threw off British rule in the eighteenth century and

flourishes as a free people with a personality of her own.

To finish with this controversial term "External Association," it seems to-day as if it has outlived any usefulness it once had. It was invented to meet the natural difficulties the British delegates had to face in persuading their conservative supporters to grant sovereign status to Ireland. It had much to recommend it then, but it was lacking in the important things—colour, popular appeal, obvious meaning. At this date it has even less of these things and the conditions which produced it have passed away. It had surely be much better scrapped. Its reverberations are irksome. It had surely be much better replaced by the warm word Alliance, which both the British and Irish people are in a better position to welcome. What the terms of an Anglo-Irish Alliance may be is for both peoples to decide.

After some weeks spent on minor questions of detail, the delegates came to the major problems—Ulster, the Crown (or the whole question of status) and Naval Defence. Of these the first two were crucial, and on these the whole discussion turned. On these Anglo-Irish relationships still turn. The Irish delegates were then prepared, as the Irish government is prepared to-day, to grant Ulster a local Parliament for all matters of local concern, provided it accepted the principle that the island is a political entity, which Ulster would do by accepting representation, *in addition*, in an All Ireland Parliament. The delegates sought to keep this question in the foreground and to postpone the question of the Crown. Here it would appear that Mr. Lloyd George was for the time being willing to co-operate.

However, he was not frank with Ulster and in his communications with Sir James Craig he stated what was not quite an untruth, since it was a prophecy, but was certainly not then a fact. He represented the aim and possible result of the conferences as an Ireland swearing allegiance to the Crown, and giving Great Britain all necessary facilities for naval defence; and proposed that Northern Ireland would retain all its present powers, under the Government of Ireland Act. (Northern Ireland was already functioning.) The unity of Ireland would be recognized by the establishment of an All Ireland Parliament, its area of jurisdiction to be settled in consultation with His Majesty's Government. Sir James Craig refused acidly and absolutely.

Lloyd George next informed Arthur Griffith that he now intended to repeat the offer to Northern Ireland *with the addendum that if the North did not wish to remain under the All-Ireland Parliament, it could secede to its present condition within twelve months.* He put it most strenuously to Griffith that in view of a Unionist meeting at Liverpool, within a few days, where Birkenhead and Sir Austen Chamberlain would risk their future careers by announcing this scheme, it would be fatal if Griffith repudiated the proposals.

Griffith was here tricked by Lloyd George. He was persuaded that the whole thing was not final, but merely something in the nature of a tactical manœuvre to get the North to a more accommodating frame of mind. He reported to De Valera as follows:—

> "I told him it was his proposal, not ours . . . He agreed, but said that when they were fighting next Thursday with the Die-Hards and "Ulster" in front,

they were lost if we cut the ground away behind them by repudiating the proposal. I said we would not do that if he meant that he thought we would come out in public decrying it."

So he acted. It is evident enough now, but was not apparently then, not even to De Valera who was in constant communication with the delegates and his cabinet, watching every move with care, that *not to repudiate is tantamount to acceptance.* He did not, so far as we know, comment on Griffith's action. And that action tolerated the idea of a seceding "Ulster", in other words, Partition.

On December 2nd, the delegates met the Irish Cabinet in Dublin, now with a draft of the complete British proposals before them. These granted Ireland the status of a Dominion, and visualized a possibly seceding North. It contained a form of Oath of Allegiance. The Cabinet was divided as to acceptance. Griffith was in a particularly painful position, since as representing the Right all his lifetime, he was not deeply concerned about the Crown if he could get self-government. Yet he was not in a position to take that stand since he now represented more than himself. About to leave for London, to reject the British proposals as they stood, he promised that he would not accept allegiance, but declared that he would not break on the Crown—an ambiguous position with which the Cabinet was apparently satisfied!

Arrived back in London the Delegates were at a loss. Already, at that Dublin meeting, the split in the Cabinet had made itself apparent. Brugha, a fiery and acidulous man, of great courage and obstinacy, had

taunted Collins that in going to sub-conferences accompanied by Griffith he showed that "the British Government selected their men." At that Cabinet meeting in Dublin, Collins and Griffith and Eamonn Duggan, three of the five delegates, had wished to accept the proposals, with some emendations, mainly in the Oath. Back in London they do not appear to have been able to suggest any counter-proposals of which there was, in their opinion, any hope of acceptance by the British. It is plain that the Dublin cabinet meeting marked the end.

It was now Sunday morning in London, and at Hans Place, the headquarters of the Irish delegation, there were angry and passionate scenes. Collins refused to go to Downing Street with what emendations there were. He declared that those who wished to break with the British could go. Griffith was equally laggard. Duggan also refused to go to Downing Street. One can see their dilemma. They did not believe that De Valera's External Association idea was practicable. They did not believe they could argue it any further. If they went back to Dublin the same arguments that had gone on at the Cabinet Meeting would recur again. They wished to sign, now, in London, and they would wish to sign if they were back in Dublin. The "Split" was already a fact. And it would remain a fact no matter what happened.

Griffith, Gavan Duffy, and Barton went to Downing Street, and manfully Griffith, whose loyal tenacity is a matter for the fullest admiration, tried to get the debate to centre on Ulster. He wanted to break, if break he must, on Craig's refusal to consider an All Ireland Parliament. Pluckily, he kept harping on this.

Then Gavan Duffy said: "The difficulty is coming into the Empire . . ." He got no farther. The entire British delegation jumped up. They declared that if that was so the Conference was over. They had got the break where they wanted the break to come—on the popular question of the Throne.

But the break was not yet come. Collins saw Lloyd George on Monday morning at 9.30, by invitation, and agreed that the Irish delegation would meet the British once more. Collins, Griffith, and Barton went to Downing Street at three o'clock. At once the question of Ulster came up again. Here Lloyd George played his trump card. He declared that Griffith, in trying to question these proposals, which he had not at that earlier stage of the Unionist convention repudiated, was now "letting him down." Griffith denied this, and held out for a definite statement from Craig. Lloyd George pointed out that this did not arise as they were going ahead with or without Craig. Either because he felt that further debate was useless, or because he felt that some vague promise of his not to "let Lloyd George down" prevented him from re-opening the Ulster question Griffith did not press the Ulster question.

Collins then tried to bring back the debate to Craig, but again it was pointed out that Craig's consent was irrelevant. There was the proposal—an All Ireland Parliament from which Ulster could secede. What Ulster would do was in its own hands, and a matter for the future, not for them. After some further discussion on detail, and a slight interval, during which Griffith must have given his colleagues his decision, they all met again.

It was now afternoon. In the cold December light

Lloyd George impressively leant over the table and held up two papers. He had prepared the stage well. There was, he revealed, a special train waiting in Euston for the courier, and a destroyer under orders at Holyhead. The courier would take one or other of these two papers to Craig. One contained the Articles of Agreement. The other declared that Sinn Fein refused to come into the Empire. If he sent the second—which he would do if each and every one of the delegates did not sign—there would be, within three days, "immediate and terrible war." Quietly Griffith said:

"I will give the answer of the Irish Delegation at nine to-night; but, Mr. Prime Minister, I personally will sign this agreement and recommend it to my countrymen."

"Do I understand, Mr. Griffith," said Lloyd George, "that though everyone else refuses to sign, you will nevertheless agree to sign?"

Recording the incident in his book, *Aftermath*, Winston Churchill says:—

"'Yes, that is so, Mr. Prime Minister,' replied this quiet little man of great heart and great purpose.

"Michael Collins rose, looking as though he were going to shoot some one, preferably himself. In all my life I never saw so much passion and suffering in restraint."

At nine the British delegates were waiting. The Irishmen did not come. Ten o'clock passed. Eleven. Still they did not come. They were arguing passionately over in Hans Place. There, again, Collins, Griffith, and Duggan declared they would sign. Barton and Gavan Duffy could not face the responsibility of re-opening the war, and agreed to sign. After midnight Griffith,

Collins, and Barton returned to Downing Street. After some discussion, on points of drafting, the Treaty was signed at a quarter past two on Tuesday morning, December 6th, 1921.

8

If, in all this necessary record of events, we seem to have lost temporary sight of De Valera, it must be left to the reader to imagine him at home, meanwhile, in Dublin, following every phase of the prolonged discussion, offering what advice he could, and trying all the time to get the Delegation to hold out for the general plan of External Association he had outlined to them in the Draft Treaty which he had drawn up before they originally left for London. He was also occupied in keeping up the morale of the home front in every possible way—reviewing Volunteers, speaking in public, organising, as best he could, either for Peace or War.

When the newspapers announced that an Agreement had been signed he was in ignorance of its contents. Later an evening paper printed the text of the oath, and at once division showed itself openly in the ranks of the I.R.A. When Duggan arrived in Dublin with the text, and De Valera found that no counter-proposals had been made, and that an Agreement to which the Cabinet had previously refused to agree had been signed, he was prepared himself to disown the signatories, dismiss them from the Cabinet, and at once repudiate the document. It might have been better had he done so at once, from his point of view, before the idea of final Peace had settled definitely into the minds of the people; though it is questionable, in that case, if

the Dáil would have tolerated such a high-handed action. Indeed no alternative to what did occur can be imagined which would have forestalled the result. It was not a matter of disagreement now between members of the Cabinet. That disagreement was representative of the entire country, Besides, the Cabinet, when it did meet, Delegates and all, was four to three in favour of the agreement. Had Cabinet decisions been subject to majority agreement—but no divisions of any serious nature had ever arisen before to establish this—De Valera should have resigned, and at once appealed to the country.

His appeal was made by a declaration to the public, in which he repudiated the Articles of Agreement and appealed to the people to hold firm until the Dáil had met and decided to ratify, or not to ratify, what had been done. The army, he declared, was not, of course, affected, and continued under the same control as before. In that, however, he was mistaken. The army was itself keenly divided, and had no intention of obeying the Dáil, or anybody else but its own wishes and its local leaders.

The Dáil sat on the 14th of December, and continued to meet until Christmas, to debate the "Treaty", as the Articles of Agreement were now popularly called. These debates make sorry reading. As they went on again after Christmas until the final decision in January 7th, they represent one of the most bitter periods in the history of modern Ireland.

A movement that had hitherto been as a movement of brothers became broken by savage recriminations, and the seeds of differences that still rankle in Irish life were sown broadcast. Every home tended to divide

on "*Ratify or Not Ratify.*" The I.R.A. was itself divided. Underground, the Republican Brotherhood was lobbying for Collins and the ratification of the Articles. In the Dáil De Valera tried to persuade the representatives to consider his alternative to the Treaty, which became known as "Document Number Two," and which was based on the External Association idea, but accepted as inevitable the secession of the North—wrapping it up however in words which tried to hold the entity of Ireland while, in practice, destroying it.

All those weeks were a spate of words. Never did the Irish weakness for multiloquence show itself more fully, and never except in later meetings of what became known as "The Second Dáil"—to which we must postpone reference—more disastrously. In any parliament there are hosts of back-benchers who rarely address the House, and rarely should. During these weeks every back-bencher had his day out, since it was the right of every public representative to speak to so important a matter and defend his choice to his constituents and history.

For De Valera it was a bitter experience. He is not a man who suffers fools gladly, and he had to sit there, in silence, day after day, listening to much honest but none the less tiresome folly. Only six months before at the time of the Truce he had met that same Dáil in high spirits and a full feeling of fellowship. "I feel," he had said, "as a boy among boys. It is as a team we have worked and as a team we shall work. With gratitude I turn to you, my comrades and colleagues, who have conferred on me what I believe to be the highest honour that could be conferred at this moment on any

human being. Because here, at an issue of peace and war, I have been chosen to be leader." He had a very different kind of speech to make now. "I am sick and tired of politics—so sick that no matter what happens now I would go back to private life. I have only seen politics within the last three weeks or a month. It is the first time I have seen them, and I am sick to the heart of them. . . . It is because I am straight that I meet crookedness with straight dealing always, and I have beaten crookedness with straight dealing. . . . What has sickened me most is that I got in this House the same sort of dealing that I was accustomed to over in America from other people of a similar kind. . . ."

The war of words went on. It was the only war, now, that De Valera could hope to win. The other side had its secret organisation. The other side had the great advantage of a positive policy. The press was wholly behind his opponents. Time was to reveal that the mass of the public was also behind his opponents. But above all the *fact* was behind his opponents. And the fact was that Ireland could not face another warfare in her present divided condition. De Valera might, by some miracle, get the Dáil to reject the Articles of Agreement. If he did . . . it was as certain as that night follows day that the whole movement would crumble to pieces, and cease to exist, within a year. A divided and disillusioned country cannot fight a war.

What was on his side? Only one thing—the symbol; the sovereignty of Ireland; the old heroic dream of past and future greatness. Even if the movement did crash, the symbol was at least still not sold away. Alas, no symbol can long outlive the unmasking of the human character who bears it. Before that war of words, that

solid month of talk, was over, every man in that Dáil was seeing his brother, for the first time, without the caparison which gives dignity to even the humblest patriot. That morning of 1916 when the Republic was proclaimed in the Post Office, common men took on that dignity. They and their successors had worn it ever since. In that wordy month it fell from them one by one, and they became common men again. Politics are a workaday affair, and the nobility of a great ideal does not, as I have said, infect such things.

The end came when the division came formally. Sixty-four deputies voted for the approval of the action of the Delegates, and fifty-seven voted against. De Valera, moved beyond control, rose to plead for discipline. He broke down and sank to his chair, sobbing into his hands.

That should, in decency, have been the end. But a not unnatural weakness fell on the Dáil. As if they could not face that common light of day which was awaiting them, they continued to talk about that noble symbol of the Republic, whose light had once given each of them an aureole, and about keeping the Republic intact until the people themselves voted on the question. Even men so realistic as Collins, so ready to meet the hard facts of life and to create with them a new heroism, a finer heroism because demanding more complexity of effort, and making greater recognition of the nature of all created things, seemed to be still caught in the webs of the old dream. Even the decisive Griffith could say, almost farcically from him in his position:—"The Republic of Ireland remains in being until the Free State comes into operation. If I am elected (President) I will occupy whatever position President De Valera occupied."

One would like to draw a curtain over all the subsequent shillying and shallying. It is painful until it becomes a joke. It becomes a joke when General Mulcahy, the Chief of Staff, who had voted for the Articles, assured the House that the I.R.A. would remain the army of the Irish Republic. It turned back into a tragic joke when officers of the intransigeant I.R.A. met in convention and told him that in that case they wished the Army to be controlled by an Executive of their own election, and not by him as Minister for Defence. At the same time they assured him that they were eager to co-operate in the speedy evacuation of the British troops *under the Treaty !* The joke put up its grinning face again on January 14th, when the pro-Treaty deputies met and formed a Provisional Government, so that Ireland now had three governments, if not four—the Northern Ireland Parliament for that area; the Second Dáil, which was still claiming to be the Dáil of the Republic; the Provisional Government; and, lastly, there was the British Government which still legally controlled Southern Ireland. Ireland also had three armies—one in Northern Ireland, the new army which was being recruited under the standard of the Provisional Government, and that portion of the I.R.A. which would not enroll itself formally under that government—or under any government. There was likewise a multiplicity of police, and publicity departments. The Second Dáil continued to meet, and so did the Provisional Government. But that final test of public desires, the General Election, was postponed and postponed. Politics, in a word, were being played by both sides.

Before the General Election was held, finally, on

June 16th, there was much hugger-mugger about a Pact and a Coalition Government which would preserve peace, and act as the Third Dáil. This was, beyond question, the last depth of folly to which Collins descended—unless, indeed, he wished at this date to change his mind about the Treaty he had signed and wished to carry on either two governments, or one Republican one. It is safe to say that the general public did not understand in the least what it all meant. They had seen their Delegates sign a Treaty. They had seen their Representatives in the Dáil approve of it. They had been promised a General Election in which they would themselves approve or disapprove of their representatives' approval of the Treaty. And now this talk about a Third Dáil! They may be taken, with apologies to the ingenious disputants who write still of broken pacts and Coalitions and Panels, as voting on one issue—the Treaty. And with any other view this biographer at least, though a Republican then and now, has no patience. Out of 122 seats, the Anti-Treaty candidates received 36. If majority decisions count for anything that was final.

The country was now in a state of spiritual disorder. Very soon De Valera on the one hand, and Griffith on the other, were about to be once more shouldered off the stage by the "men of action." All over the country, as a result of the evacuation by the British troops, Republican members of the I.R.A., or as they came to be called the "Irregulars," held barracks and towns. In Dublin they entrenched themselves defiantly in the Four Courts under Rory O'Connor. They were well armed and had ammunition in plenty, but no field-guns. Pressed by the British on the one hand to

implement the Treaty, and by the populace on the other hand to restore order, the Provisional Government finally decided that this play-acting about holding a Republic intact with one hand, and establishing a Dominion parliament with the other, had to stop.

Collins woke up. His old fighting fury descended on him. Borrowing field-guns from the British, he bombarded the Four Courts at the end of June. Still hypnotised by the symbol the Republicans were aghast at this brutal use of British guns against fellow-Irishmen: though what they can have expected Collins to do is hard to say. Order guns from France or America? Within forty-eight hours the Four Courts garrison retired, blew up the building, and surrendered. The whole fight was not a real thing. The truth is that the Republicans, still caught in the idea that a fight for a fine cause has to be fought out in the manner in which they had been fighting for two years—symbolically, magnificently, in an atmosphere of historic nationalism, with the whole race behind them, lending them courage, dilating them beyond human size—had no heart for a fight against their fellows. The meaning which historic nationalism had given the fight against England was gone. You could fight an English soldier, because he was not just Tommy Atkins but the Empire and all it meant. But how could you fight Mick Collins when you knew perfectly well that he was Mick Collins and nobody and nothing but Mick Collins? It took time before Mick Collins and the whole Free State Army began to take on a wider significance. Propaganda, the elucidation of the fundamental position by De Valera, the extraction of the basic principles involved —that did in time cast an impersonal opprobrium over

the Irish Free State, which made it possible for something like a national sense of the symbol to come slowly to life again. It took exactly ten years. Meantime the "realists" had the game in their hands.

From the Four Courts the fighting spread all over Dublin. What had happened in 1916 happened again to poor old O'Connell Street. For days the guns bombarded the buildings in which the Irregulars had taken up their positions. De Valera was now an Irregular soldier like any other. He was back where he had been six years before, behind a rifle in a besieged building. Once more the Republican positions were isolated one by one until only two main positions remained, the Grenville Hotel and the Hammam Hotel, now both disappeared. Once more, to save lives that might be more useful elsewhere, the garrison decided to evacuate or surrender. A part surrendered on Sunday, July 2nd, 1922. De Valera and others remained behind. The following day he left the building, with these others, and went into concealment in Dublin.

Brugha, the most obstinate and courageous fighter of the lot, would not leave the Hammam. The building went on fire, but still he would not stir. He received orders to evacuate, but he would not stir. Free State soldiers creeping along under the walls, safe from any but bullets fired directly downwards,—and that was impossible,—as the windows were covered from frontal positions, threw petrol into the burning building. At last Brugha ordered a general surrender before the walls should collapse, and the tiny garrison of about fifteen men and women went out into the lane at the back. Still Brugha would not surrender. The flames roared and there was no sign of him. Then his small, tough figure

came rushing out in the lane, his revolvers before him, firing blindly at the enemy troops, his clothes black with the soot and smoke. Under a volley he fell to the ground. He had fourteen bullet-marks on his wiry body since the Rising of 1916. He died two days later.

The old guerilla warfare now sprang up all over Ireland as the Irregulars were gradually driven from the towns they had occupied. It went on all that summer. Griffith, worn out, died on August 13th. Collins died fighting on the 22nd. The thing became by degrees more and more savage, and nothing that the Tans and the Auxiliaries had done in their time failed to be done now. Civil War is of all wars the most pitiless. Executions of captured Irregulars, intensified by reprisals, began in the autumn. During the winter and spring of 1922–23 seventy-seven Irregulars were arrested and shot. They included Rory O'Connor and Erskine Childers. The execution of this man was of all acts perpetrated during that period the most shameful and the least forgiveable. He was an Englishman. He had given up everything to his sense of justice. He was a guest of Ireland.

De Valera lived in those days through his Inferno. Like Dante he descended into Hell, and his face began to show the marks of his journey. All that he had fought for, all to which he had devoted his life, was in ruins. He was now forty years old—an age at which a man knows that the next round figure will put him among the elderly men. He was powerless. To use his own despairing words he watched from "behind a wall of glass." He was repudiated as leader by the majority of his people, not acknowledged as leader by the remainder. Not until the soldiers began to realise

that the game was up did they think about him, or turn to him, and then they turned to him only to give him the task of announcing defeat.

He had tried in the autumn of 1922 to get back some sense of order into the situation, to get somebody to be definitely responsible—the H.Q. of the Army, or else the now hypothetical Second Dáil which had never been formally dissolved. In October, 1922, the Irregular Army had yielded so far as to give him partial loyalty —still holding to certain powers as far as concerned the right to declare war—which was, indeed, an unconstitutional right to claim, and gave some trouble later to the consciences of many when the Catholic Hierarchy *condemned the entire Irregular position.*

As the spring of 1923 approached, and with it the threat of long days, and late light—fatal to guerilla troops hard pressed—the inevitability of surrender became apparent. Even to those of us who were rank and file of the I.R.A. in the South it was apparent that there was no real fighting being done, and that the continued resistance was hardly more than formal. Thousands of Irregulars were in jail. No word was heard from the political leaders. Propaganda was non-existent. Information was totally lacking. The Army had become a shambling, wandering, scattered band, and down through the officers there seeped a general sense of despair. Peace moves were frequent—one could see the envoys coming and going to the local Headquarters. The only source of information as to the general state of the country elsewhere came through the public press, which was wholly anti-Republican, and from this one saw plainly that the Free State was functioning everywhere except in remote glens where

no government ever demonstrates itself to any obvious degree; apart from a policeman collecting dog-licenses or daring, occasionally, to search for a poteen-still or a poacher. The Irish Republican Army existed as such only on paper, in the sparse files of a few underground offices in Dublin, or some H.Q. moving from cottage to cottage in the hills. Long afterwards it became known that, in that spring, De Valera had been meeting the Army officers, trying to formulate some terms of peace which would leave the way open to the political side of the movement to re-organise, and which would not compromise the old symbol of the Republic.

But the whole thing was unreal. Miss MacArdle, in her history of the *Irish Republic*, quotes a Proclamation from the Government of the Republic of Ireland, headed "Dáil Eireann," dated April 27th, 1923, and signed by Eamonn De Valera, as head of the Government, and Frank Aiken, for the Army, which ordered the suspension of all aggressive action. It may have reached the officers: no doubt it did. This biographer can only say as one member of the I.R.A. in the First Southern Division that he cannot remember ever having heard of it, or of hearing it mentioned by his comrades. Possibly the officers thought it wiser to withhold it, and the Press gave it no publicity. Possibly it was communicated. One forgets easily what is not part of the world of reality. Much of all that happened from this period onward is a strange mixture of the all too real and the all too pretentious.

The biographer of De Valera can regard him at the close of the Civil War only as a character moving from the realm of pity to the realm of tragedy, but on other plane holding himself manfully to the position he had

taken up years and years before. If his words and his behaviour are those of a man moving on the farthest periphery of actuality, that is, now, the tragedy of the idealist in a world of compromise, and reflects less on him than on the general, larger tragedy of life which does not tolerate for too long any abstraction of itself, however noble. The pity of his situation is not so much that he could do nothing, but that the net was closing in on him. For him, too, the time was coming when he would have to make his compromise with life.

On May 24th, 1923, he issued an order—or rather the Chief of Staff of the Irregular Army issued an order, but it was his word that now carried weight—to cease fire, and dump arms. Fire had long ceased. There must have been upwards of 12,000 men in jail. It did not seem as if there remained anything possible for the idealist to do; unless, like Brugha at the Hammam, it was to immolate himself. The Government gave him an opportunity for that when it declared for a General Election in August, and De Valera told East Clare that if it nominated him he would appear in public and "nothing but a bullet" would stop him.

Clare did nominate him, and he did appear in public, on the platform prepared in Ennis. He was arrested and put in jail, where he remained for the better part of a year. At that election he received, once again, twice the support of his opponent, and to general astonishment the Party he led won forty-four seats out of one hundred and fifty-three. The official Government Party won sixty-three seats. The remainder was divided up between Labour and Independents, all supporters of the main issue of the Treaty, but as events were in

time to show, capable of being won over on other issues to oppose the Government. The De Valera party could not, however, enter the Free State Dáil, both because to do so would be to acknowledge the Treaty, and because to do so they would have to take the abhorred Oath of Allegiance.

That winter of 1923 put an end to the resistance of the Irregular, or Republican Army. It was, for the most part, in jail or interned. (Those who would wish to get a vivid and unforgettable picture of the conditions under which they existed in those jails might read Peadar O'Donnell's good-humoured, realistic book, *The Gates Flew Open.*) What kind of life De Valera himself led in Kilmainham Jail, in Dublin, one can barely attempt to imagine. If he did not look to the future in black despair he must have looked forward to his release with the greatest misgivings. When a man is forty-two it is hardly a good time to begin all over again. And yet that was what he had to do. It is said that he spent his days reading Einstein, or such like books, or playing handball with young Free State officers in the prison yard. Towards the close of the year, 1923, a fermentation of anger at their prolonged inaction arose in the camps and jails, supported by what one might almost speak of as a handful of girls and boys outside—to that the "Die-Hard" organisation was now reduced. His men in these camps went on an All-Ireland hunger-strike, until at one date there must have been about five thousand men starving to death. Had De Valera gone on hunger-strike at that date his biography would close at this point. He had the wisdom and the courage to decide against it. But a hunger-strike cannot be conducted *en masse*—it needs picked men.

The strike began to crumble, and then broke. Men rushed for food—literally crowded to the barbed wires calling out for it. It was awful and pitiable. They were released. It was clear that their last weapon had broken in their hands. By January, 1924, one saw them marching through the streets from the railway stations, ragged as tramps, their little bundles under their arms —but still singing. In July, 1924, the Free State government opened the jail gates to their former leader, and bade him go free. As far as they were concerned, De Valera had ceased to count.

PART THREE

POWER
1924–1939

1

For eight years after his release (ten since the Treaty) De Valera was in the wilderness. For four of those eight years he presents the slightly comic, slightly pathetic sight of the impractical idealist who tries to persuade himself and the world that he is a wholly practical man. During those four years he was following an amazing will-o'-the-wisp, known as "The Second Dáil," which, briefly, amounted to the idea that the Dáil which preceded the Free State had never been legally dissolved and was therefore still the legitimate government of the counry. Which was about equal to a possible contention by some group of British M.P.'s that the Parliament before the current Parliament had not been legally dissolved—one must imagine some impossible quibble—and that they were therefore the Government of England. For the second four years of these eight in the wilderness De Valera presents a different picture —that of the man with a sensible cause, and a practical method, hammering at public opinion until he wins it. All through these years the Free State government party regarded him as something midway between a mild lunatic and a dangerous agitator.

His appearance justified the impression. During the last century Europe was full of men who had his strained

and tousled look—refugees from Russia, Italy, the Balkans, wandering fiercely after their hearts' desire from Switzerland to Paris, and Paris to London, Russians hiding in Rome, Italians starving in London. From Michael Bakunin to Lenin, or Charles Louis Napoleon Bonaparte to Mazzini, they were to be found by the thousand in garrets, cheap restaurants, and great libraries, with an umbrella under the arm or a roll of documents sticking out of an overcoat pocket—apparently hopeless dreamers: the typical oddities of the British Museum or the Boulevard Montparnasse. Like them De Valera was poorly dressed, and there was the same wild look in his eye. His elongated figure, with the sloping bottle shoulders, was covered by a dark overcoat —he always dresses in black or near-black—with a rubbed velvet collar. The pockets sagged in folds from the weight of things stuffed into them. Like all his overcoats (owing to his enormous height) it had the look of a coat on which the tailor had forgotten to turn up the hem. His inevitable black soft hat was peaked and pointed like his peaked and worn face, and it did not so much contrast with his skin as make a *rappel* with its sallow dullness. His trousers were baggy. Those carved concave lines from nose to chin were almost straightened out by the intensity of his determination that likewise drew his thin lips into an etched horizontal. If anybody had met him stalking along some London or Paris street, a black rod of a man, his dark eyes like frozen fire, he would have started back a little and then said, with a shrug, as the tall, priest-like figure went perpendicularly by—"Another of them!" His followers were not far different. They also were "on the rocks" as far as worldly wealth

was concerned. They too had the wads of documents. They had the same capacity for political disquisition, if not the same keenness or pertinacity in it. But they were of softer metal. There was something more tousled about them, more shambling. He was in appearance, and in fact, their spear-head and their rod.

You could see him easily in those days. He welcomed interviewers.

Occasionally he disappeared. Then he was, like so many other agitators and revolutionaries, in America, collecting dollars for his campaign: Garibaldi is one example. He particularly wanted to start a daily newspaper, knowing that all the main and the greater number of the provincial papers were solidly against the man "who started the Civil War," or "the man who cost the country seventeen millions." While in Ireland, in the intervals of addressing meetings, he presided over his Ghost Parliament—that Second Dáil of the years 1924 to 1928. On that his attitude was as clear, to himself, as the attitude of any theologian to some question (such as "Is war murder?") which does not in the slightest way affect the actions of a single living human being.

Here, to him, was the idea of a sovereign Ireland. It had been proclaimed in 1916. It had been projected as a Government in the First and Second Dáils. These Dails had been recognised in successive elections by the people. They had, in some degree, functioned for several years, as the popularly recognised Government of the Irish Republic. The election held after the Treaty debates in the Second Dáil had been a "Pact Election" and did not affect the Republic. Therefore the Republic still lived, even as it had lived from 1917 to 1922. It

was a fact. If it could still be supported, even by a minority, it would still remain a fact; and it might, again, as before, win over the majority, reject the Treaty, the Free State, President Cosgrave, the later Dáil, all in it—as it had previously rejected the British Government and the British Parliament. To this day there are Republicans, implacably intransigeant, with exactly the same policy, and the same opponents, except that to the British Government they now add Mr. De Valera instead of Mr. Cosgrave. They still believe that the Second Dáil was never dissolved, that the Republic lives.

The weakness in the argument was that the Irish Republic never lived, and its Government never was a fact. The whole metaphysical idea, fostered by De Valera himself, that if an unfree people gives allegiance not to the legal Government but to a rival body, that rival body becomes the *de jure* Government, one may readily allow. But the idea that if it asserts itself even to some degree, it becomes the *de facto* Government, is nothing more than an idea. To the idealist, however, that is enough to make it a fact. So, in the most amazing way, he continued after his release to claim that he and his minority of Republicans, elected by a minority of the people, was the true Government of Ireland. The Free State Government did not, in this, seriously attempt to refute him, either by word or by act. They had done that effectively in the Civil War. De Valera's persistence was too much for them—they just could not be bothered. If he attempted in any way to establish by direct action that his ghostly conclave had any rights over the bodies of the people they would soon put a stop to him. Meanwhile he could go on play-acting as long as he chose.

It is clear enough now that De Valera and his followers were secretly aware of the absurdity of their position. Had they simply acted as a minority political party it would have been different. The difficulty there was that they could not enter the Dáil of the Free State any more than they could have entered Westminster. For one thing there was the acknowledgement such a step would involve; for another, every member of the Free State Dáil was obliged to sign the Oath of Allegiance. Instead they continued for about two years to meet as the Republican Government—the Second (or pre-Treaty) Dáil which had never, they maintained, been dissolved. Resolutely they clung to the old symbols.

They refused to recognise the Free State Parliament, and professed to co-operate in no way with the Free State Government. They refused to apply for Free State passports, for example, and yet their consciences were troubled by the constant use of Free State stamps. As if magnanimously, they denied themselves the power over life and death, and did not at the same time realise that if they rejected that right, or any right, they were without moral sanction in anything. Their position was best defined by Miss Mary MacSwiney, the sister of the Lord Mayor of Cork who died on hunger-strike. They were "a symbol of a very important fact, that the people have no right to surrender their independence at the ballot-boxes; if you allow that you are raising a situation in which you are appealing to the majority. The people have no right to do wrong." The retorts are too obvious to be worth while. So they held on, attempting to continue the tradition and authority of the Second Dáil—that last Dáil elected before the Treaty—long after the people had withdrawn their support,

and even after their numbers as a Schism or Rump were reduced to a bare twenty members of that Dáil. They are thus an interesting historical curiosity, and a wonderful example of the scholastic turn in the Irish mind. These impoverished rebels believed themselves to be the Government with a magnificent indifference to every single fact that mocked their claims.

De Valera, who had been learning what politics mean in this hard world, was never very comfortable with this Second Dáil idea. After all, the scholastic mind is a very hard mind of its own order. Of metaphysics, and these were the perfect metaphysicians, it has been said that it is *L'art de s'égarer avec méthode.* But when you have been through the hell of a civil war, the luxury of methodically confusing yourself is not so attractive. When your whole life is in question, that kind of mental wandering ceases to have point, since it suggests no destination. Besides, the longer the imaginary rulers existed the more absurd their position became.

With an illogicality that did not strike them, the only Dáil, or Parliament, they recognised was the Second Dáil which had rejected the Republic in favour of the Treaty. Since then there had been an election, the so-called "Pact" election of 1922, followed by a Third Dáil (Provisional Government or Free State), and another election in 1923, that before which De Valera was arrested in Ennis, followed by a Fourth Dáil (Free State) which was to sit until May, 1927. They had won seats at each of these elections. Madame Markievicz, for example, had been defeated at the Pact Election of 1922, but successful in 1923. She asked plaintively for advice in her case. "If I was beaten at the next election I would still remain on here, and if at

the next election I did not go forward I would still be here." Professor W. F. P. Stockley asked in apprehension, "What about the Second Dáil members if they all die off? It is a desperate state of affairs if there is only one surviving member of the Second Dáil to hold on to a position!" This picture of one-man Government must have given De Valera much food for thought. A member like Sean Lemass, now Minister for Industry and Commerce, and as hard-headed a man as there is in Ireland, cannot have been enthusiastic about a policy like this; for he had never been a member of the sacred Second Dáil, though elected to the Third, and was therefore, in theory, not a representative of the people at all.

In this impasse, they set up under the leadership of De Valera, in August, 1924, a body known as Comhairle na dTeachtai, or Council of Deputies, where all faithful Republicans could meet in council, but where only members of the Second Dáil could vote. This sounds very like one of De Valera's formulas to please everybody. But in counsel's opinion this soon became a very tangled business, since such a Council could not do the things it proceeded to do (it chiefly passed resolutions) *as a sovereign assembly*. This became, for a change, a practical proposition when some eight million dollars of Republican funds became a matter of legal dispute between the Free State Dáil, which claimed direct succession, and these seceders who also vehemently claimed direct succession to that original Dáil which had floated the National Loan. It is interesting, and significant, to find that it was money that made the dreamers awake.

De Valera could stand this nonsense no longer; not even his metaphysical brain could hold such tenuous

threads of remote life intact. He saw himself as the head of a theological debating society rather than engaged in practical politics. He was talking to the air while the enemy chuckled and consolidated its position undisturbed. The only obvious course for him was to enter current politics as a Left Wing party and stop meeting as a Government. Unhappily he had bound himself to his symbols tightly. He had been vociferous in his denunciations of those who had entered the Free State Dáil. He had denounced them, in particular, for taking the Oath of Allegiance. He had pledged himself that he would never, under any circumstances, take that Oath. So far, good. The idealist was still intact. He now so far modified his position as to declare that he would, in the interests of the country and the future of the nation, enter the Free State Dáil, and participate in the work of Government, if the Oath were removed.

From this on one's admiration for the man increases. It is not every abstracted idealist who can grind his teeth and resolve to establish himself among unidealistic men. But the main point is that if he did not publicly take such a decision as the above, there was hardly one of his followers with the courage to do it. Here he stops being the lecturer and becomes the leader in the best sense—the first in the gap whom others will imitate. But his decision threw what he had of a movement into dismay. The I.R.A. withdrew its allegiance from him in November, 1925. His new party found itself isolated from Sinn Fein, Cumann na mBan, and the Fianna, or Boy Scout movement. In brief, he *was* beginning yet once again.

Guarantees were asked of his new party, which he called Fianna Fail (Soldiers of Ireland), and refused. It

seemed not only possible but likely that De Valera would recant his entire position, enter the Dáil, take the Oath, and so do everything that he could have done in 1922 without a civil war. (The only comment necessary there is that though he may have thereby made it more easy for the I.R.A. to start that war, they would, it is safe to believe, have started it without him.) The Council of Deputies withdrew their allegiance from him and elected a new President of the Republic—President Art O'Connor.

In the event there was yet another "split." The absolute logicians of his Left Wing Party seceded once more; or perhaps it was he who seceded from them. The "Faithful Survivors," as the remnant of the Second Dáil—now with less than the quorum permitted by their own Constitution—continued to meet, denouncing De Valera for his treachery, and claimed, as they claim to this day, to be the legitimate inheritors of the Republican Provisional Government declared in 1916, and ratified by subsequent elections up to the date of the Treaty. The logic of facts pressed harder and harder on De Valera. For two more years he tried to get into the Dáil without taking the Oath, and then Mr. Cosgrave, President of the Free State, likewise got tired of this abstentionism and forced De Valera to make his decision.

He introduced a law to the effect that the Oath had to be taken before nomination of candidates. De Valera took the step he had so long tried to avoid, led his followers to Leinster House, and entered the Dáil signing the Oath under duress, declaring that he took no oath, and anyway did not intend to be bound by it. From that date begins his latter-day career as a politician

and administrator. That was shortly after the assassination of Kevin O'Higgins, Minister for Justice and Vice-President of the Executive Council, an incident which serves to keep before our minds the still-disturbed nature of the country.

In the Dáil De Valera began by initiating a purely constitutional policy. He set himself to win power, remove the Oath, and, quite frankly, indeed blatantly, transmute the Free State Constitution into a Republican Constitution pure and simple. The obnoxious symbols, now, were the Oath and the Governor-General, in the first place, and, in the second place, the presence of British military in certain fortified positions such as Cove and Whiddy—part of the facilities for Naval Defence under the Treaty. This was actually the policy which those of the Left who had decided to accept the Treaty, five years before, had adumbrated for themselves. They had accepted the Treaty—especially the Collins or I.R.B. element—as what they called "a stepping stone to the Republic."

If it be said that De Valera could have taken this action in 1922, before the Civil War, the answer is—"He could." If it be asked, "Why did he not do so then?"—the answer is that he did not think he would have to, and that he was thereby proven wrong at the greatest crisis of his life and of Ireland's life in our time. If it be asked, "What did he gain by not entering the Free State Dáil as a minority party in 1922?"—the answer is—"Very little." But that "little" was that he avoided the stigma of accepting the Treaty, and so upheld the claim to absolute Independence. Which is one of the secrets of his influence to-day. If it be asked, "Did he not yield up the symbol in 1927 when he did enter

the Free State Dáil, and took the Oath?"—the answer is that he denies it, maintaining that he acted under duress and actually took no Oath. But, it will be asked in amazement, "Does not everybody know that he did these things?" The answer is, "Yes." "Then," cries the questioner, "has he not lost all respect as an honest man?" The answer is that the Irish mind leaves all such matters to the private conscience and the Irish mind is as labyrinthine as the caverns of Minos. And should our imaginary questioner ask any questions about the Irish mind, or Irish morality, this biographer will beg leave, in an Irish way, to fold up his tent and quietly steal away. Or venture to suggest to the reader his own biography of the great prototype of the Irish mind, its creator and first exemplar, Dan O'Connell. Or, better, quote the following personal explanation of De Valera with regard to that Oath :—

Speaking in the Dáil, in 1932, when the Act was about to be passed which finally removed the Oath, he said of that earlier decision :—

> "I asked myself what my duty was and anything that was not wrong I was prepared to do. I was not prepared and would not have felt justified in committing perjury, or doing anything equivalent to perjury. The Party opposite has told the people that this is not an oath at all. I believe that the words 'I swear' mean an oath, but Deputies opposite think differently and say it is a formality."
>
> (The Treatyite deputies, of course, had formerly been eager to minimise the Oath.)
>
> "They used the expression long before I did. They said it was a mere formality and had no binding

existence. That it demanded nothing. Anybody could take it. I asked myself whether in a crisis like that I would be justified in staying outside when in fact this was a mere formality. There was only one way to find out. What did I find? Instead of taking this oath openly, where people could see what was done, as in other Parliaments, they hid it away in a dark room out of sight, so that the public would not know what it was.

"I said at least we were entitled to find out, and we published a signed declaration stating our attitude and that attitude was in fact this: the majority party held at the time it was not an oath, and we were going to put it to the test. In order that our coming into the Dáil could not be misrepresented we made that declaration. When I came to take this so-called oath I presented to the officer in charge that document and told him that that was our attitude, that we were not prepared to take an oath, and I have here a written document in pencil, in Irish—the statement I made to the officer who was supposed to administer that oath. I said:—'I am not prepared to take the oath. I am not going to take it. I am prepared to put my name down here in this book in order to get permission to get into the Dáil, and it has no other significance.' There was a Testament on the table, and in order that there might be no misunderstanding, I went over, took the Testament, put it away, and said:—'You must remember that I am not taking any oath.' And that has been done by every member of our party, and it is said that this is conforming with Article 17. Is it not time to get rid of this nonsense?"

Some deputy in the Dáil who wished to know if Mr. De Valera did not know what it was he was signing his name to, received the reply:—

"Yes. I signed it in the same way as I signed an autograph for a newspaper. If you ask me whether I had any idea of what was there, I say, Yes, but it was not read to me, nor was I asked to read it."

The ingenious subtlety of the Irish mind has many features which recommend it. For one thing this life of ours is a highly complex thing, and the mind which brings no complexity to it cannot hope to reflect its complexities; and that instrument of the mind cannot when complex, speak of itself without the greatest finesse. But as there have been many times when that great prototype of the Irish politician, O'Connell, went over the border which separates the truth from the lie, so have his disciples. That particular speech of De Valera's was delivered with his usual air of righteous self-belief. It makes one squirm.

The ardent admirer of Mr. De Valera may ask, "What could he have done in that impasse?" What he not merely could have done, but should have done, is clear as noonday. He could and should have said:— "This Oath is obnoxious, as the entire Treaty position is obnoxious, and I am going to get rid of both these dishonourable things in any and every way open to me. I cannot fight against these things in a constitutional way through parliament unless I take that Oath and enter this parliament that I hate. I hereby take this oath. I do not intend to be bound by it because I take it under duress at the point of the gun. I intend to smash all

it stands for. If that is a dishonourable action I will settle that with my own conscience Let every other man do likewise." That at least would be better than the fiddling business of pretending that he was an angel out of heaven who never did, and never could, do wrong. One may imagine how Daniel O'Connell or Michael Collins would have faced such a situation, and come out of it, if not as angels, certainly as men.

2

Between 1927 and 1930 he set himself to win the ear of the people. He had decided to found a daily newspaper, and visited the United States several times to collect money for the purpose. The bulk of the shares are held in his own name as managing director. It appeared in 1930 under the title, *The Irish Press*. In his general propaganda he concentrated on two things—the national position in relation to the Treaty, and the lesser sins of the Government; these were over-expenditure, failure to exploit Irish industrial resources, failure to introduce tariffs at a faster rate and in more extreme form, failure to hasten the work of the Land Commission in dividing up the large, purchased estates among landless men, and so forth. The Oath, and the Governor-General, should go; Britain should be urged to restore the ports. Later he hit upon a most powerful form of appeal to the electorate in the rural areas, in other words the mass of the people. The idea was really presented to him by Peadar O'Donnell, the novelist and Left Wing Republican, who, in rousing his native Donegal people against the Free State government bade them refuse to pay their Land Annuities, or rent.

These annuities are the annual rent which the farmer pays the Land Commission, and which the Land Commission had always, under British Rule, paid the British Government, who, in turn, paid them to the original landlords who had sold out under various Land Acts from the 1880's onward. That is to put the matter simply. (Actually, the landlords had been bought out by means of a loan, covered by public securities, issued by the British government; the rents supplied the government with the means of paying the holders of the stock, largely but not of necessity the original landlords.) De Valera turned these annuities into a national grievance. He claimed that the British Government had no legal right to the annuities which belonged to the Irish state. His argument was supported by several lawyers, and refuted by several more; it based itself on the provisions of the Government of Ireland Act of 1920; ignored agreements made by the Cosgrave Government with the British Treasury, on the ground that they were not ratified by the Dáil—which, to a mere layman's mind, savours of "politics" on Mr. De Valera's part; and the argument against paying the Annuities further enlarged itself by appeals to history, original confiscations by the English, and so welded itself into the old symbolism without which De Valera is never happy.

The farmers saw here a picture of land without rents, for they did not fully appreciate that the question was for them purely academical, since the Annuities would have to be paid to the Irish Land Commission in any event. That aspect was not stressed during the campaign. The urban and rural population was further promised more housing schemes, Employment Schemes, relief works, Widows' and Orphans' pensions, subsidies

for new industries. All was bound together under the one central idea of a self-contained Ireland, independent economically and politically of Great Britain. It had the great appeal of a coherent scheme which could be presented both in terms of hard cash and national price. It was the old policy of Arthur Griffith and *Sinn Fein*—Self-Reliance—brought up to date.

Meanwhile the Cosgrave Government had been in power since 1922. They had organized the country. They had had while doing so to face a prolonged armed resistance which cost the country seven million pounds in the first year, and ten million in the second. They had had to act with terrible severity, and they had had to labour against the sympathies of a considerable portion of the country. They were deprived of the fruits of the peace which they had hoped to garner by the Treaty, and so could not appeal to the people, either with any lavish expenditure, or with any magnificent nationalist symbolism. In all their dealings with Great Britain they were handicapped by the disunity of the country, and in their own minds they were infected by a natural reaction away from high-falutin'-ism and towards hard-headed realism. As the responsible government they could not hope to rival the Opposition in generous promises, at the same time that they incurred all the opprobrium of a firm administration coldly insistent on public order. They were the first native government of Ireland, and for a people, bred for generations on emotional appeals, colourful symbolism, vast dreams of the prosperity that would follow on freedom, images of Ireland rising from her chains like a beautiful woman, etc., but a people without any political education of any kind, and with no tradition of self-government, the

reality was a little chilling. It may be thought that the first Free State government, deprived of the symbolic value of Collins and Griffith, had only a limited popular appeal and a despartely hard task, well done.

Moreover, in 1924 they had suffered a bad set-back over the North. The Treaty had made arrangements for a Boundary Commission which would re-consider the area to be ruled by the Northern Parliament, having regard to the wishes of the inhabitants. When the time came for this Boundary Commission to sit, Sir James Craig declined to have anything to do with it. De Valera had helped to divide the Nationalists in the North by his intransigeant movement. The Free State government was in a quandary. All that was open to them to do was to insist on a revision of the Treaty, if the Treaty was not going to be enforced.

In this crisis they acted weakly, permitted the British Government to appoint a representative of the North, and an impartial Chairman. The third and only other member of the commission would be the Free State nominee. Everything at this stage, apart from the impartiality of the chairman, depended on the interpretation of the Article of the Treaty in question. Of those who signed the Treaty only one was alive on the Free State side—Eamonn Duggan; the other two living signatories were De Valera-ites. On the British side the whole weight of British opinion was used to minimize the force of the Article, and to make it appear that the Article merely visualized a few minor alterations in Northern territory—a parish here and a parish there. A strong Irish government, with the entire people behind it, might have begun a fierce opposition to any such interpretation, but the Free State govern-

ment was not prepared, and was in no position, to lead such an opposition. The people were too worn out by the Civil War. In the event the boundary was left exactly as it was, and the Irish government lost considerable prestige.

Another factor, of which the last has not yet been heard, contributed to the downfall of the first Free State government. That was the extremist, underground element of Republicanism which claimed the old title of the Irish Republican Army, and attempted to function as such. Violent acts were, no doubt quite correctly, attributed to this illegal body, whose personnel changed from time to time, and goes on changing, but whose aims have always been the same—the establishment of an Irish Republic and the (presumptive) coercion of the North. Juries were not prepared to convict men charged with offences—they feared to convict them—and the government set up what became known as a Military Tribunal under an act amending the Constitution. For this unconstitutional and tyrannical action the government was berated by De Valera, and with a characteristic inconsequentiality blamed by the public, which as jurymen refused to support the existing law. When De Valera came into power he used the same unconstitutional machinery against his predecessors and in 1939, when the "I.R.A." started a series of bomb explosions in England, he introduced identical amendments to his own ideal constitution.

World economic conditions likewise went against them. Prices began to fall. The cattle trade was badly hit. The farmers complained. Industry was grumbling. Gradually De Valera's energy began to prevail, and the electorate turned back to him. Finally in 1932 he

succeeded in attracting the largest number of votes of any party in the State, the figures being, for first preferences:—

Fianna Fail . .	566,469
Cosgrave Party .	449,808
Independents . .	125,174
Labour . .	98,284
Farmers . .	34,421

It was a strange event. Here, by sheer weight of persistence, by his own self-belief, by hammering day in and day out for ten years on the one idea of an independent Ireland, by refusing to admit a single error of judgement, or the slightest divagation from his ideal, De Valera was once more at the head of Irish affairs; but he was now at the head of the government of a State against which he had fought in arms, and against which he had protested passionately by every word. The people were at least sufficiently tolerant, and sufficiently satisfied with his earnest assertion of his own honesty, to yield him again their trust. Whether he has justified it during the last period of his career is all that remains to be considered.

3

In power, De Valera set himself to implement his promises one by one. In 1932 he informed the British government that in his opinion the Oath of Allegiance was not mandatory in the Treaty and that he proposed to remove it from the Constitution on the ground that the people have the right to alter the Constitution as they please. At the same time he declared that he was withholding the Annuities until the matter should be

settled by arbitration. As Great Britain held that this was a domestic matter, and he would not tolerate an Imperial board, or chairman, his offer of arbitration became null, and Great Britain placed special duties on Irish imports to recover the money—which they did. This, with the prohibitive tariffs which he placed on British imports, became known as the Economic War. We may leave it to wage itself out from 1933 to 1938, and concentrate on the constitutional issue raised by the abolition of the Oath.

It is complex and interesting but may be summarised briefly. The original Free State Constitution was drawn up between British and Irish statesmen, and it implemented the Treaty. Efforts had been made in Ireland to draw up a Constitution more in conformity with national aspirations than the Treaty itself, but the British ministers very naturally refused to sanction it, and the final Constitution repeated in every particular the fundamental position of the Articles of Agreement. This Constitution was duly ratified by the British and Irish parliaments. There do not appear to have been any objections to modifications of this constitution on the part of the Irish government, which in fact passed seventeen amending acts in nine years, without, however, touching on the vital clauses controlling Anglo-Irish, or Commonwealth relationships. In the opinion of eminent constitutional lawyers, like Professor Berriedale Keith, that clause of the Treaty which grants that Canadian constitutional practice shall apply to the Irish constitution, permits alterations in the constitution through address to the Imperial parliament.

Mr. De Valera has not adopted this approach, and it is highly unlikely that, in practice, the Imperial parlia-

ment could tolerate vital changes. Its reception of his announcement with regard to the Oath makes that clear. The result is that the present Irish Constitution is accepted by Ireland and not by Great Britain, but Great Britain is unwilling to take any active steps in the matter, so that, so far as one can see, nobody now knows what the true position is in law, and it seems most likely that usage will in the course of time establish whatever position easefully consolidates itself over a period of years. As far as the Oath of Allegiance is concerned, the essential fact remains that no Irishman takes the oath.

The abolition of the Governor General took place gradually. On the resignation of Mr. James MacNeill, who succeeded the first Governor General, Timothy Healy, De Valera appointed a figure-head, with instructions that he should live a retired life, not occupy the official residence, and appear in public at no functions. He performed the minimum of his former duties as representative of the Crown; in his place, for example, De Valera personally received envoys from foreign countries. By degrees the office of Governor General was degraded in public opinion and became something of a joke. In the new Irish Constitution the office does not appear and, so, lapses.

On the economic side the new Government at once began to speed up everything, The tariffs imposed on British and foreign imports had the immediate effect of producing countless small industries, and developing existing ones. The public suffered considerable discomforts, and serious increases in the cost of living, with unexpected loyalty. That was something the first Free State government both would not and could not

have done. The progress of the economic development of the country under De Valera, in the face of many difficulties, and especially of the danger of general unpopularity, is the best possible test of the force of his appeal as a national leader.

A few figures will easily illustrate the overt results this New Economic Policy. The Department of Industry and Commerce issued in 1937 statistics to show the effect of the drive for industrial expansion on twenty-three selected industries between 1932 and 1935:—

For other industries the decrease in imports would seem to indicate an expansion in home production: e.g.,

	£'s—1931	1935
Bread	196,553	997
Flour Confectionery	44,648	3,526
Butter	176,455	1,263
Cheese	114,701	2,854
Margarine	218	57
Condensed Milk	18,274	2,455
Timber Manufactures	1,270,565	1,200,833
Brushes	51,088	40,078
Earthenware, etc.	180,764	121,752
Total	£2,053,266	£1,373,815

This has meant some decrease in exports, but actually there has been an appreciable increase in the export of butter, cheese, biscuits, condensed milk, and brushes.

The new factories which have grown up are in most cases modest enterprises. However, they are there, and they may expand. All sorts of goods formerly imported are now manufactured wholly or mainly in Ireland—motor-springs, dry batteries, aluminium goods, typewriter ribbons, carbon-paper, safety-razor blades, enamelled hollow-ware, wall-paper, cutlery, golf-

DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE

COST, OUTPUT AND EMPLOYMENT IN TWENTY-THREE INDUSTRIES

The following table showing in summary form the definite figures for the twenty-three industries included in the limited Censuses for the years 1932–5 inclusive, is taken from the *Irish Trade Journal*. Totals for all twenty-three industries are given at the end of the table.

Industry	Gross Output	Cost of Materials	Net output (value added to Materials)			Persons engaged at Mid-Oct. excl outside piece workers
			Total	Wages (including earnings of outside workers)	Remainder of net output (inc. salaries)	
Bacon curing						
1932	3,453,729	2,942,532	511,197	199,130	312,067	2,115
1935	5,163,741	4,430,751	732,990	245,764	487,226	2,597
Grain Milling						
1932	5,839,359	4,791,274	1,048,085	298,879	749,206	3,321
1935	7,859,456	6,361,508	1,497,948	384,833	1,113,115	4,000
Malting						
1932	398,785	190,049	208,736	73,636	135,100	901
1935	374,396	182,810	191,586	68,170	123,416	900

Industry	Gross Output	Cost of Materials	Net output (value added to Materials)			Persons engaged at Mid-Oct. excl outside piece workers
			Total	Wages (including earnings of outside workers)	Remainder of net output (inc salaries)	
Sugar, Sugar Confectionery, Jam-making						
1932	1,753,020	1,147,552	605,468	214,919	390,549	2,997
1935	3,280,535	2,211,004	1,069,531	402,793	666,738	4,528
Aerated and Mineral Waters						
1932	293,441	62,527	230,914	62,092	168,822	996
1935	322,934	86,732	236,202	68,265	167,937	1,130
Brewing						
1932	5,817,312	1,391,872	4,425,440	608,119	3,817,321	3,931
1935	6,309,734	1,553,998	4,755,736	583,866	4,171,870	3,941
Distilling						
1932	190,987	57,996	132,991	35,050	97,941	351
1935	285,418	93,144	192,274	43,725	148,549	390
Tobacco						
1932	5,438,315	4,171,772	1,266,543	195,731	1,070,812	2,150
1935	5,973,721	4,797,249	1,176,472	210,085	966,387	2,278
Bricks, Glass, and Monumental Masonry						
1932	183,822	45,581	138,241	81,506	56,735	847
1935	519,086	197,827	321,259	182,145	139,114	2,343

Industry	Gross Output	Cost of Materials	Net output (value added to Materials)			Persons engaged at Mid-Oct. excl. outside piece workers
			Total	Wages (including earnings of outside workers)	Remainder of net output (inc. salaries)	
Wood Furniture and Upholstery						
1932	544,728	216,085	328,643	185,277	143,366	1,968
1935	694,557	292,498	402,059	241,197	160,862	2,713
Assembly, Construction and Repair of Vehicles						
1932	731,397	427,541	303,856	276,682	27,174	1,361
1935	2,238,250	1,543,895	694,355	375,581	318,774	3,272
Metals						
1932	582,362	274,689	307,673	194,487	113,186	1,917
1935	1,314,426	661,692	652,734	329,118	323,616	3,867
Engineering and Implements						
1932	333,730	115,464	218,266	113,881	104,385	1,247
1935	607,027	266,828	340,199	180,718	159,481	2,282
Linen, Cotton, Jute and Canvas						
1932	386,883	257,198	129,685	95,646	34,039	1,710
1935	854,064	604,730	249,334	141,783	107,551	2,705

Industry	Gross Output	Cost of Materials	Net output (value added to Materials)			Persons engaged at Mid-Oct. excl. outside piece workers
			Total	Wages (including earnings of outside workers)	Remainder of net output (inc. salaries)	
Woollen & Worsted						
1932	659,166	332,052	327,114	173,065	154,049	2,518
1935	959,860	551,613	408,274	204,856	203,391	2,880
Clothing, Wholesale Factories						
1932	1,473,771	799,363	674,408	375,822	298,586	7,052
1935	2,518,497	1,347,173	1,171,324	654,562	516,762	11,172
Boot and Shoe: Wholesale Factories						
1932	462,925	229,559	233,366	108,010	125,356	1,714
1935	1,297,726	693,735	603,991	273,049	330,942	4,591
Hosiery						
1932	275,207	138,488	136,719	59,520	77,199	1,488
1935	890,324	473,595	416,729	182,487	234,242	3,768
Paper Making and Manuf. Stationery						
1932	249,918	118,403	131,515	63,868	67,647	979
1935	543,505	283,265	260,240	127,758	132,482	1,784

Industry	Gross Output	Cost of Materials	Net output (value added to Materials)			Persons engaged at Mid-Oct. excl. outside piece workers
			Total	Wages (including earnings of outside workers)	Remainder of net output (inc. salaries)	
Printing, Publishing Bookbinding and Engraving						
1932	2,025,445	475,629	1,549,816	657,104	892,712	5,867
1935	2,216,105	536,649	1,679,456	721,896	957,560	6,463
Soap and Candle						
1932	437,834	269,205	168,629	46,211	122,418	531
1935	508,704	303,302	205,402	54,018	151,384	813
Fertilizer						
1932	388,849	238,052	150,797	113,283	218,778	1,261
1935	379,631	231,407	148,224	161,940	334,091	1,990
Chemical, Drug, Paint, Oil and Polish						
1932	362,378	181,114	181,264			
1935	788,434	440,627	347,807			
*Total: 23 Industries specified above						
1932	32,283,363	18,873,997	13,409,366	4,231,918	9,177,448	47,222
1935	45,900,131	28,146,032	17,754,099	5,838,609	11,915,490	70,407

balls, copper tubing, rubber boots, bolts and nuts, tennis balls, bakelite goods, glass bottles (actually formerly made in Ireland, but the industry was almost extinct), motor spirit; etc.

The Housing problem, most acute in Ireland owing to the fact that little or no new building had been done from 1914 to the Treaty in 1922, and owing to the general disturbance not much for the ten years after, was met by increased State subsidies to local authorities and accredited societies, i.e. grants of sixty per cent of the cost in the case of slum clearances, and loans in rural areas to local authorities, the State there paying sixty per cent of the loan charges, in order to keep the rentals within the capacity of the worker. Grants not exceeding £40 per house are also available for small farmers and agricultural labourers reconstructing their own houses.

One sees the effect of this on every side as one travels through the country, especially in the poorer areas, where such a sum counts for a great deal. The majority of the houses erected in the rural areas by local authorities are four-roomed houses with a floor area of about six hundred square feet. The scheme works out as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
Loan charges on £300 (the limit allowed for capital cost)	17	13	4
Add maintenance and administration . . .	2	10	0
Add rates	1	5	0
Total outgoings .	21	8	4
Deduct State contribution at 60% of Loan charges.	10	12	0
Deduct tenant's rent	5	4	0
Total .	15	16	0
Leaving nett annual loss in letting . . .	5	12	4

The State has estimated that a total capital expenditure of £20,000,000 is needed to solve the housing problem—two millions to go in free grants, and eighteen in loan. It is the boast of the De Valera government that in the *ten* years from 1922–1932 (when it came into power) the state made grants of two-and-a-half millions in this way, whereas in the following *five* years the state made grants for this purpose of nearly three millions. The Department of Local Government published in 1937 statistics from which we may take the first four examples (by counties in alphabetical order):—

1922–1932. COSGRAVE GOVERNMENT

County	No. of houses (including flats) erected by: Urban Authorities	Rural Authorities
Carlow	52	20
Cavan	25	—
Clare	68	—
Cork	759	55

1932–1936. DE VALERA GOVERNMENT

County	No. of houses (including flats) erected by: Urban Authorities	Rural Authorities
Carlow	198	77
Cavan	100	90
Clare	158	92
Cork	1013	138

The farmer, though he found that whoever got the Land Annuities, he had to pay, was pleased to find in 1933 that his annuities were reduced by fifty per cent, as a gift, and all arrears of more than three years' standing were cancelled. The division of land among the landless men was speeded up. Thus, in 1933–34 some

30,000 acres were divided; whereas in 1934–5 the total was over 100,000 acres. Bounties on exported cattle did something to offset the severe loss following on the economic war.

The relief of the unemployed has been one of the most costly of the public services under the De Valera government. Previous to his entry into office the register of unemployed was quite unrealistic. This was so far remedied, and amounts of relief so increased, that whereas the total cost of Unemployment Assistance in 1927–8 was a bare £101,224, by 1936–7 it rose to over two million pounds. Old Age Pensions were made more easily available by abolishing the bar to receipt of pensions which formerly applied to those who received board and lodging, or clothing, from relatives, and by relaxing other similar regulations.

The Widows and Orphans Pensions Act was passed in 1935, and developed by another act in 1937; these pensions are both contributory and non-contributory. The insured worker makes a weekly payment of 8d. for a man and 4d. for a woman, which, when they die, entitles their widows and children to a pension. The non-contributory scheme covers those who are at present widows and orphans, and is a gift from the State. The present State subsidy amounts to £450,000 each year. Free milk for necessitous children costs the State £90,000 a year. For a period there was also free meat for the poor.

Enough has been said to make it clear that De Valera has based his policy on the needs of the urban poor and the twenty-five-acre farmer. If a social policy is to be commended because it represents the immediate needs of the majority, then his is to be commended;

and if it is realistic for that reason, he is to be commended for having based it on the more common order of life in Ireland. There at last the idealist comes into his own. There the natural divisions of Left and Right have demonstrated their natural affinities in the usual way, and will, in all likelihood, continue to divide on similar lines. In the course of time Republicanism in politics may well be expected to develop into Socialism in economic affairs, and that clause in De Valera's Constitution—to which reference will be made presently —which seems to protect private property may be "interpreted" to suit that development.

It is beyond the capacity of any one person, layman or expert, to pass useful comment on this economic policy, beyond saying that it is, at the moment, in relation to its prime intentions a complete success. That rise in output, and in employment, illustrated by the Table on page 133 has continued in later years. Preliminary reports of the Census of Industrial Production for 1937 showed that in all these industries there has been a substantial increase in gross output. To take the first four—Bacon Curing, Grain Milling, Malting, Sugar and its products, the figures for 1935 and 1937 are, respectively:—

A.	£5,000,000	increased to	£7,000,000
B.	£8,000,000	„ „	£11,000,000
C.	£300,000	„ „	£400,000
D.	£3,000,000	„ „	£4,000,000

The other industries on the list have flourished equally. Naturally increased output does not mean increased profit, or even any profit. Enterprises have broken on that rock before now—including several of these infant Irish industries.

This result, however, has not been achieved without paying for it. A Banking Commission which sat from 1934 to 1938 comments on the industrial policy that it has increased urban employment at the expense of a rising cost of living. It points to the fact that State expenditure has risen enormously—from £31¼ million in 1931 to £43¼ millions in 1936. It is not actually concerned at the country's financial position, which it considers absolutely sound, but with the trend of policy, and the dangers involved in the masking of the fundamental situation by the favourable balance resulting from the fact that Ireland is a creditor country. It points out, in illustration, that three of the largest credit items are precarious, and might cease at any time, i.e. the Sweepstakes, British pension receipts, and emigrants' remittances. Moreover the Economic War had a serious effect on agriculture, and combined with this went the "War Policy" of the De Valera government to make Ireland self-supporting as regards food. A deliberate drive to replace the breeding of cattle, hitherto Ireland's main industry, by the growing of crops such as wheat and beet, has been successful—as far as it goes. Here the Banking Commission remarks that this policy of growing crops for which we have no climatic or other advantage has, in effect, lowered the net product of agriculture as a whole and impaired its exports. In sum the Commission advises curtailment, and a more conservative spending policy.

Nobody has so far denied the wisdom of this report so far as purely financial considerations are concerned. The De Valera government has received it coldly, and a large body of public opinion feels that other considerations may outweigh objective accountancy. Thus, in

1937, the Minister for Finance met the charge that he was overburdening the State with debt, through his support of the economic, agricultural, and social policy of the cabinet, by pointing out that it could not be called extravagant expenditure to spend money on such things as a decent housing scheme. On the other hand the fact that the halving of the Annuities for the farmer took twelve millions off his back and placed it on the back of the Exchequer merely raises the question of the wisdom of the whole economic policy, the Economic War, the agricultural policy, and so on.

The attitude of the Opposition is that the whole Economic Policy is a delusion and a fraud. They say that whereas increased output in older industries behind a shelter of tariffs, and fresh output by new industries under a virtual system of monopolies, looks fine on paper, the essential thing is—"What is the cost?" A new factory looks grand in some country town that never had a factory before, and it undoubtedly employs many idle hands: but who is paying for it but that same town itself, in combination with the rest of the country, both through increased taxation (to pay for subsidies and the like) and through an undeniable stiff increase in the cost of living. They insist on the indissoluble inter-connection of all economic forces, and insist that the only realistic question to ask is, "Has the *national* economic position improved?" To this the Banking Commission replies in the negative. And to the Banking Commission and the Opposition the Government's answer is that the economic situation has not disimproved and the general spiritual condition of the nation has.

Only time will tell whether the cost of the new Econo-

mic Policy is or is not more than the nation can bear, i.e. whether it is or is not all the while secretly undermining the financial security of the country. The Conservative men will point to the fact (say) that every new loan floated by the Dublin Corporation has to be offered on more favourable terms to the public, which, they say, is getting nervous: they insist that the budget is not an honest budget, that it is balanced by borrowing, and give such illustrations of the interdependence of all these things as that one effect of the new Sugar Beet factories has been to lower Excise income on imports of sugar, and that had not the last beet crop been fortunately a poor one—compelling unexpected imports of cane-sugar, with unexpected large revenue for the Excise—the last budget would have been a less happy one even than it was. Few economists and no laymen can judge or prognosticate here. With so many complicated elements to consider on every hand, who can say if the enterprise is worth the expenditure? It is too soon to say.

While there are thus many who hold that the present Economic Policy is going too far and too fast, others maintain that it is not going far enough or fast enough. There seemed to be emerging in recent months from the Labour Party a movement to cut off the entire Irish financial system from sterling. The Left, represented by the Old I.R.A., a body corresponding in some degree to the ex-soldier movement in other countries, likewise feels that no economic policy is a really national policy as long as all operations are ultimately controlled by the Bank of England. What the basis of credit would be, in that event, is not transpicuously clear. The writer is no authority on such matters and has never met two

authorities who are agreed on such matters, so that he can only record the existence of this feeling of dissatisfaction about Irish financial arrangements among certain sections of the people. The Left points out that at the present moment, summer, 1939, Irish securities are among the soundest on the market. It feels that, as things now stand, other things elsewhere being equal, it is at least as likely that a separate financial system in Ireland, based on the natural resources of the country, would hold itself as firmly as the currencies of other small nations in Europe. The Left here believes that the relation between prices and purchasing power is artificially controlled by the banks for profit. It knows that the Irish banks are in turn controlled by the English banks. It irks national pride to feel that no native economic policy can ever, in these circumstances, be free of British influence.

There we come back to the political question—Irish independence, a self-reliant and self-contained Ireland, indifferent to what Great Britain might do in retaliation for Ireland's "disloyalty"; or, on the other hand, an Ireland in friendly co-operation with Great Britain, and not concerned with a rigid, and perhaps dangerous policy of economic self-reliance. Between the two—between De Valera's insistence on the absolute separateness of Irish nationality, and Mr. Cosgrave's belief that co-operation with Great Britain need not impair Ireland's nationality, Irish politics will probably waver for many years to come.

That brings us, naturally, and in sequence, to the new De Valera Constitution. It was submitted to the electorate in 1937 and ratified by plebiscite. It was not particularly popular, and at the accompanying election

De Valera found that he was returned to the Dáil without a majority over all other combined parties. The figures were:—

Fianna Fail (De Valera Party) .	69
Fine Gael (Mr. Cosgrave) . .	48
Labour (Mr. Norton) . .	13
Independent	8
	138

The Constitution, so far as we know, was his own creation. It declares Ireland a "sovereign, independent, and democratic state", to be called *Eire*; its territory consists of the whole of Ireland, but it temporarily limits the application of its laws to the present twenty-six counties. It abolishes the Governor General, all reference to the Crown, and to the Commonwealth of Nations. It establishes a President, or Uachtaran, who shall be elected by direct vote every seven years. There are two houses, the Dáil, and the Senate. The Dáil, through the President, appoints a Prime Minister, or Taoiseach (pronounced *Tee-shock*) who, in turn, appoints his ministers—two of whom he may select from the Senate, but his Deputy and his Minister for Finance must be members of the lower house. The President is advised, or may be advised, if he so wishes, by a Council of State.

This Constitution may be said to put a seal upon the prolonged struggle of De Valera for the independence of Ireland. In a sense it is his main achievement, and every biographer of the man must pause before it. It has the considerable merit of articulating, once for all, the claims of the Irish people to sovereign independence. It is the basis of the laws of Ireland. It

embodies and enthrones in the highest place the national tradition. He has done this thing, and the nation has laid its hand upon it as upon a testament. No observer from outside can ignore it, and no future generation can evade it, and no foreign country can give it any practical denial but the denial of armed attack. Here is what Southern Ireland believes in, and a summary of itself, containing—unlike the first Constitution of the Free State—no overt limitations and prevarications of which it need be ashamed.

And yet, an enormous number of electors voted against it, and it has created no great enthusiasm. And when one examines it, and remembers that the great secret of this man's power in his own country is his power to represent Ireland symbolically to his people, one is struck by the unimaginative, and indeed commonplace quality of the document. It is pedantic and circumscribed. It states no fine general truth that it does not immediately qualify with so much care that the force of the original statement is lost and made to seem puny—as if a general truth were not a noble thing but a dangerous thing to be shown to the public in a leash.

Thus under the head of Fundamental Rights we read:—

> I. All citizens shall, as human persons, be held equal before the law.

(Most people may wonder what is meant by "as human persons".)

> This shall not be held to mean that the State shall not in its enactments have due regard to differences

of capacity, physical and moral, and of social function.

The whole effect is that of a theologian's distinction rather than of a statesman's assertion.

Or we come to the following:—

The State guarantees liberty for the exercise of the following rights, *subject to public order and morality*:—

(Already the qualification, so open to endless attempts at definition!)

The right of the citizens to express freely their convictions and opinions.

(Then comes the destructive part:—)

The education of public opinion, however, being a matter of such grave import to the common good, the State shall endeavour to ensure that organs of public opinion, such as the radio, the press, the cinema, while preserving their rightful liberty of expression, shall not be used to undermine public order, or morality, or the authority of the State . . .

Again one sees that the draughtsman was not merely content to state a right, leaving to common-sense, convention, the courts, and time, the business of interpreting the basic right, but must interpose himself so far as to do for the people the work of interpretation and qualification which properly belongs to convention and time. In the process he does not make the

primary statement meaningless, but he so diminishes the force of the statement that it is already attenuated before it is well stated. That, again, is the theological mentality which is not concerned with general truths but with their application to cases.

Or take the Article which deals with private property.

> The State acknowledges that man . . . (The next phrase is another theological cliché) . . . in virtue of his rational being, has the natural right, antecedent to positive law, to the private ownership of external goods. The State recognises, however, that the exercise of the rights mentioned . . . ought in civil society to be regulated by the principles of social justice.

The word "civil" society puzzles. The terms "principles of social justice" are sheer jargon.

> The State, accordingly, may as occasion requires delimit by law the exercise of the said rights with a view to reconciling their exercise with the exigencies of the common good.

Private property held under such a Constitution does not appear more safe than if there were no such constitution. It would seem that the document was carefully examined, if not revised, by representatives of the Church before publication. One notes that whereas the above article is deemed sufficient to protect "civil society", there is special provision for the protection of the property of religious, who are apparently superior to "the principles of social justice."

> The property of any religious denomination or any educational institution shall not be diverted save for necessary works of public utility and on payment of compensation.

This fatal tendency of De Valera to explain things somewhat pedantically has had a bad effect on the entire constitution. It has reduced it to a series of pious aspirations, and in one case stirred up against him so much opposition that he almost found his project defeated by the force of public opinion. This was the Article which endeavoured to protect, or interfere with (according to one's reading of the intention) the rights of women. The clause read:—

> The State shall endeavour to ensure that the inadequate strength of women and the tender age of children shall not be abused, and that women or children shall not be forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their sex, age, or strength.

A Conditions of Employment Bill had previously aroused opposition among women workers by its effort to keep women out of certain trades. This article, and De Valera's well-known, rather old-fashioned, ideas about the place of woman in society, roused them again. It seems an unnecessary thing to have inserted in a constitution.

Had he kept the document within smaller proportions, and concentrated solely on the international political side, he would have had a much better reception. As it was 528,296 electors voted against it;

686,042 for. In its political side it far outweighs the achievement of his predecessors; otherwise it evokes little admiration.

Great Britain's attitude to the Constitution is somewhat anomalous. It has not recognised it. It has not formally denounced it. In short, it apparently considers it best to turn a Nelson eye on Ireland. If Ireland is to slip out of the Empire it had best be left to do so gradually, usage finally deciding what her position is. Internationally Ireland is still regarded all over the world as within the Empire, but as De Valera has said: "If they wish to keep on saying we are in the Empire we cannot stop them." For all the useful external purposes he is content to recognise the Throne—but as what nobody knows. On Irish passports for example he, as Minister for External Affairs, continued up to recently to "request and require, in the name of His Majesty, King of Great Britain, Ireland, and the British Dominions, all those whom it may concern to allow the bearer to pass freely without let or hindrance, and to afford him every assistance and protection of which he may stand in need."

It is a situation without precedent which only time will clarify.

4

In April, 1938, the Economic War ended in an agreement which brought the two countries much closer together. The settlement, in the words of the *Irish Times*—Conservative Right—went further than ever the most optimistic thought possible. The exacerbating annuities dispute was settled by a payment of ten million pounds in a lump sum by Ireland—a quite

good bargain. The Irish government further agreed to modify certain tariff, set out in schedules, so far as to permit fair competition by British traders, while at the same time adequately protecting the new Irish industries. It is too soon at this date to visualise the effect of this modification, but one effect it *ought* to have is to lower the cost of living somewhat. On the other side the British government agreed to remove the penal tariffs on Irish cattle, which is, possibly, the most welcome feature of the agreement since it at once lifts a heavy burden from the hard-pressed farmers and gives scope to the main Irish agricultural export. In this way the animadversions of the Banking Commission are met at some points.

The agreement gave De Valera a great opportunity to win the majority he desired, and in June, 1938, he got it. His present position is:

Fianna Fail . . .	77
Fine Gael . . .	45
Labour . . .	9
Independent . .	7

Two typical concomitants of that election are worth special notice. Angered by his failure to get a safe majority in previous elections, and by a growing truculence in his allies, the Labour members, he threatened to abolish Proportional Representation if he was not returned with a clear mandate. This threat roused considerable opposition. He was charged with dictatorial intent. His retorts were characteristic. He maintained that the function of government is to govern, and that a system like that of France, where no one party is ever free of the hampering aid of lesser allies, could not be welcomed in Ireland where a firm

government is needed. That is, overtly, true, since Proportional Representation aims to give the small sections opportunities they would not so easily get under the old system, Yet, what an outcry there would have been eleven years before if the first Free State government had raised the same cry. Majority rule was not, then, a principle to which De Valera gave much respect. One suspects, too, that when he speaks of a firm government he really means a firm government under Eamonn De Valera. The incident illustrates, once again, his utter self-belief—the arrogance of the modest man and the complexity of the simple man.

At the same time he fought the election on two planes —one represented by his achievement of the new Agreement which ended the Economic War, and the other represented by the new drive against Partition which he began at this time. That is typical of the man. He never fights for any cause without plenty of solid bullets in his locker, and without at the same time the imaginative appeal of a flag over him.

The drive against Partition began slowly. The people were not, and are not, deeply moved by what they consider an impossible situation, and they have been inclined to treat the matter as a sleeping dog. The main trouble is that the Nationalists in the North have been badly organised for years, have not kept to any consistent policy, and have not been able to make any effective appeal to the South. If the North is to be won over it will be won over by its own minority, rather than from outside, and that minority needs a leader of the first order. At times it appears to favour abstentionism; then, suddenly, its cause crops up in the Six Counties Parliaments. Then the I.R.A. in the North

blows up, and it would appear that the movement is not political but military.

Again, it is never quite clear whether the south wishes, through its leaders, to conciliate the north directly, or to bully it through pressure on Great Britain. This may be, in the opinion of the leaders north and south of the boundary, the most effective general method to follow, but it leaves the population in the south a little bewildered, and it has the effect of inducing it to leave the matter in the hands of the politicians. Nevertheless De Valera's well-known persistence will undoubtedly prove its worth again. He will slowly build up an emotion against Partition, and by sheer dint of nagging away at it he will insert into the public mind both at home and in Great Britain an irritation that will turn in the end on the problem, if with no other desire than to get rid of it somehow or other.

Actually the South has very little, if anything, to gain by junction with the North. It would be a junction on terms, and those terms would have to be (to put it mildly) most attractive to the north. Her entry must offer new and firm competition to the new Irish industries, and place a further burthen on the general national debt; for she has a large industrial population with a high unemployment quota. (Belfast has for years been counted as a "depressed area".) She would undoubtedly keep her own local parliament, so that, in effect, nothing much would be gained by the south but the symbol of unity. There are two counties (out of the six which form Northern Ireland) that by every moral right do belong to the South—Tyrone and Fermanagh. In these there are Catholic and Nation-

alist majorities whose forced inclusion in the North is an injustice. The expression of public opinion in these counties is consistently stifled. Electorally the whole of this area has been gerrymandered. Indeed it is true of all six counties that they are governed by a Big Business oligarchy in Belfast. If the other four counties are satisfied, it is not for an outsider to do more than shrug his shoulders. In these two counties, Tyrone and Fermanagh, the majority is not permitted to express any opinion.

The whole situation is complicated by prejudices not confined to any one side of the border. It has, for one thing, to surmount a rivalry of extremism which is to be deplored. One kind of bigotry shows itself in attempts to destroy, in the north, Catholic churches. Another, in the south, in threats to cinemas which show films supposedly of British propaganda. Meetings of Nationalists in the north are banned on slight pretexts, and the common law is almost in abeyance where the expression of opinion is concerned. In the south the Protestant minority is becoming more and more apathetic about itself, and whatever pious aspirations or resolutions may be found in the Constitution of Eire about religious tolerance it is a matter of common knowledge to those who care to enquire, or even observe, that the Protestant in the south has as little chance of getting his fair share of public appointments as the Catholic in the north. It would be interesting to know just how many Protestant dispensary doctors, for example, have been appointed within the last five years in the south, while the public still remembers the furore raised when a Protestant girl was appointed librarian in Mayo some years ago. Neither north nor

south need pretend that the other is alone in this kind of penalisation on account of religion and private opinion. Religion in the south is just as solidly organised as in the north, and is no less narrow-minded. Comparisons may be odious, but they point clearly to the fact that in every way pseudo-nationalist enthusiasm has an evil effect on life both sides of the border. No cultivated life can develop freely in Ireland as a whole until it is removed. The people, whether north or south, may be counted on to coalesce with tolerance and understanding. It is the vested interests which are keeping the two parts of the island separate—the Tory extremist element in the North, the Catholic Nationalist element in the South, and the old Die-Hard Conservative element in Great Britain which does not care in the least what happens to Ireland in whole or in part, so long as the north is held as a spear-head into the south in the interests of imperial security.

This problem is likely to occupy De Valera for the remainder of his career as a public man. His difficulty is that the more he behaves as Nationalist, Gaelic-revivalist, anti-British, the more does he estrange the north. It is not the north alone which is keeping itself distinct. The south is maintaining Partition even more effectively by refusing to demonstrate a practical spirit of tolerance and broad-mindedness. No Northerner can possibly like such features of Southern life, as at present constituted, as its pervasive clerical control; its censorship; its Gaelic revival; its isolationist economic policy. De Valera realises the effect of at least some of these things. He shows no readiness to relax any of them. Speaking this summer, in the course of a by-election, of the Irish language revival he declared that if he

had to choose between unity and the language, he would choose the language. (I will presently quote him as saying that if he had to choose between freedom and the language he would choose the language. And when he speaks of the language he means the Irish language as the *sole* spoken tongue of Ireland.) The censorship, far from being relaxed, is being intensified, and it applies to the cinema, and books, and is about to be applied to the stage, not only on grounds of alleged indecency or pruriency, but on grounds of religious unorthodoxy. That is not the theory of the thing; but it is so in practice. There is no appeal from this censorship. It is, as one Irish writer has said, not law but outlawry. To such things the Southern nationalist tends to close his eyes when he asks the north to "Come in."

As to economic arguments anent the union of North and South the best thing to do is to let a Northerner speak for himself. The following is taken from a long statement by Sir Joseph McConnell, M.P., in the London *Times*.

> "Northern Ireland's present interests in export trade are as great as, if not greater than, those of any other part of the world. The values of export trade per head of population of Northern Ireland, New Zealand, and Eire, show the extent to which the trade of Northern Ireland has been developed:
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | Northern Ireland . . . | £42 5 0 |
> | New Zealand . . . | 34 0 0 |
> | Eire . . . . . | 7 7 0 |
>
> "Irish linen, manufactured in Northern Ireland, was the largest individual export from the United

Kingdom to U.S.A. during the last decade. Apart from this major industry, there exists in Northern Ireland a large-scale ship building industry, engineering, the manufacture of aircraft, clothing, tobacco, rope, cord, twine, table waters, and a considerable number of miscellaneous industries, the importance of which in the economic life of the country may be gathered from the fact that the number of persons engaged in manufacturing, building, commerce, and finance, constitutes fifty per cent of the gainfully occupied population.

" All those industries at present enjoy absolutely free access, unrestricted by any customs barrier, to the market in Great Britain, the advantages of Imperial preference in Empire markets, and the assistance and protection which the British Government alone can give in foreign markets.

" To all who have studied the question impartially, it is evident that if Northern Ireland were associated with the fiscal and economic system of Eire, our foreign trade would be seriously prejudiced, both by the factors mentioned above, and by increased cost of production; while our industries manufacturing for home consumption, and those small industries established in the south under the protection of a high tariff wall, would find it impossible to exist side by side."

Much as I might wish to minimise the force of these arguments, as a Republican anxious for a united Ireland, I must record that as far as I have been able to find out, and I have consulted expert advice, Sir Joseph McConnell's facts are in the main correct. The North

does depend even more than we do in the South on its exports, and these exports, unlike ours, are mainly industrial. Out of the £54 millions of Northern Ireland exports in 1937, £31½ millions were "articles mainly or wholly manufactured", and another £7¾ millions comprised ships, tobacco, cigarettes, rope and twine. As Sir Joseph McConnell says, all these are admitted from Northern Ireland to Great Britain free of duty and quota. If Northern Ireland came in with the rest of Ireland, obviously the increase in the home market caused by the opening of the twenty-six counties to Northern Irish trade would be only a slight advantage compared with the total export capacity of the North at present. Though many of the hindrances to the entry of Eire's industrial goods into Great Britain were removed under last year's Trade Agreement, there is still quite a number left.

One must further appreciate that the real fear of the North is that a re-integrated Ireland might thereupon leave the Commonwealth, in which event it would be foolish not to expect increased restrictions on our exports to England, particularly our industrial exports. If Mr. De Valera were to guarantee to remain within the Commonwealth . . . but he might just as soon sign his political death-warrant. So, unless Ireland managed to secure the goodwill of Great Britain in leaving the Commonwealth, the North as part of Ireland would see itself faced with a sharp loss on its export trade, not compensated by its increased trade with the South. To put the thing in its mildest form, the North could expect small financial gain from being part of a United Ireland, and might suffer serious loss.

On the question of "increased cost of production"

Sir Joseph McConnell is doubtless thinking of the fact that, in the South, under its present policy, some of the old industries have now to buy raw materials at home at higher cost, that the higher cost of living in the South as compared with the North tends to push up prices, and that taxation and Trade-Union regulations are more extreme there. (The Trade-Unions have never been active in the North.) Northern Nationalists explain this by maintaining that northern Big Business deliberately exploits religious differences to divide the workers.

Enough has been said to make clear that the economic argument cannot be used by the South against Partition, and is in fact all for it. Even the one black spot in the North, its chronic unemployment problem, is not going to be improved by restrictions on trade with Great Britain, while the great snag of Eire's high cost of living, which we freely accept as being worth the nationalist candle—our general code of values is evidently less materialistic than that of Northern Ireland—is made clear in the curious anomaly that even those exports at which we excel, such so butter and bacon, are so manipulated by various levy and price-fixing devices that they cost more at home than abroad!

The crucial question overshadowing all this is really the political one. What would De Valera do politically if the North did come in? Whenever he has been reproached by his Leftist followers for not declaring a Republic immediately, he has always replied that he could if he wished do so for the Twenty-six counties, but that if he did so he would for ever cut off the North.

The implication is obvious. After the political question there is what we can only call the "spiritual" question. The North and the South appear to worship different Gods. Our national tradition does not fire the North Their imperialistic sentiment makes no appeal to the South. Religion itself has bred two different kinds of mentality, two far removed attitudes to life, which look at one another as at a stranger—often in mutual derision or even contempt. That may find a *modus vivendi*, but as far as the Imperial question is concerned, until the South gives explicit guarantees to the North on this vital matter, it is hard to see that the North will, or could be expected to budge. What De Valera really thinks about this possible future contingency is impossible to tell. He is far from frank about it all. Judging by his technique in the past he has probably not thought about the matter at all: his motto has always been "Cross your bridges when you come to them."

Prophecy, George Eliot once said, is the most egregious form of error. Still, a biographer does not pretend to infallibility. He may be permitted to make his mistakes in public, provided that he admits that he is doing no more than giving a personal opinion, based on the character of his subject as he sees him. I should say that Partition will outlive Mr. De Valera—unless some cataclysm involves these islands in circumstances of an unforeseen nature. His thunder is on the Left—the old nationalist symbols that give him strength and offer him power—and the North wants peace and profit. If he moves to the Right he loses his strength and his power. I should sum up by saying that if the North ever does come in the North will dictate its own terms. If the southern government of that day does not accept

these terms, it will fall. If it does accept them, it will equally fall. They will be tantamount to an ultimatum—and a surrender.

5

In this résumé of De Valera's régime since 1932, we have had to omit a great number of things which are best taken in a final summary of his achievement. For when one comes to assess the entire man one realises that he is not to be found in the obvious, overt, expressible things that reveal this achievement.

His personality seems to become dissipated as soon as we begin to translate it into other terms.

Yet, there is one objective thing, a concrete projection of the man, where he may be expressed without loss. That is the social revolution which has overtaken Irish life in his time. He did not begin it, but he did complete it, and without him it would have died out in its early stages for lack of nourishment and encouragement.

When Griffith became President of the Irish Free State, and after him Cosgrave, Ireland was still, and for some years remained, the old Ireland. Superficial changes attracted easy notice—soldiers in green instead of khaki, police in blue instead of bottle-green, and unarmed police at that, and now called Civic Guards, green pillar-boxes for red, green stamps for red, Irish headings to official correspondence, an Irish coinage. But when once the visitor got inside the customs barrier, and had taken these things for granted, the rest was not obviously much altered as compared with the old Ireland. To take a little example, which was much harped on by the Left opponents of the Cosgrave government, Irish ministers of state at a public function dressed

precisely as English ministers would at a public function —top hat, striped pants, folded umbrella, and so forth. It is a small, and niggling thing, but the Irish public never quite could get over it. It was no use to assert that this is continental dress—they just knew it as English manners and they did not care for it, and they derided it. All this may be provincialism. The fact remains that the people did not like it.

Behind the changes and behind the samenesses there was, however, growing up a new and more assertive democracy. Men who had been regarded by the Big House as their inferiors, to be patronised, to be treated as uncultivated men, came into power. The Civil Service took in the sons of small farmers. All local appointments went to the native Irish who in former times would have had to manœuvre artfully to hold such posts. For example: the old Resident Magistrate, so familiar from the pages of George Birmingham, usually *a man of private means, a retired army man, possibly* a younger son of some English family, gave way to the young Irish barrister, who was called a District Justice, while the local farmer, as Peace Commissioner, replaced the burgher Justice of the Peace. The army was wholly democratic. In the old days one saw the subalterns in the grandstand at the Curragh or Punchestown. Now one saw young fellows with the country blush of health on their cheeks, strolling among the crowds in and out among the roulette tables and the trick-o'-the-loop men. Not one of them had a private income. One sees a major-general riding in the trams—possibly with his youngster on his knee—a thing unknown, and indeed forbidden to the British Army. The same is true of the police. All sections of the community coalesce into a

friendly unity. It is, in short, very like the life of a French provincial city or country town, and it is very pleasant. Only yesterday, in Cork, I saw a bishop and a woman in a shawl travel side by side in a penny bus.

Under the Free State government this was in its infancy. It moved a little creakily and self-consciously. The desire on the part of the government to conciliate and assure the Anglo-Irish people of wealth kept up, as against this democratic egalitarianism, something of the old hierarchy of social distinctions. I have no doubt any member of that Free State government would deride this, and refuse to see it; but their fall was largely due to their failure to see that the mass of the people wanted the democratic kind of thing in full earnest. The Governor General, for example, held *levées* to which, indeed, almost everybody could come; yet in a young democracy people need to be induced to come, and it was rather the bourgeoisie of Dublin society, and the *remnants of Anglo-Irish society which did come.*

The Republican opposition *exploited* every tendency towards social distinction, there is no denying, but it is also true that the Republican opposition was by nature and outlook antipathetic to social distinction. They took their antipathy rather too far on occasion, and acid observers like the Dublin wit, St. John Gogarty, made bitter fun of their *voulu* democracy. Yet, somehow or other, the *bourgeois gentilhomme* strikes one as being more ridiculous and more deserving of satire, and when one looks back at the history of Ireland, into her ragged past, and at her rabble in arms so persistently fighting for its rights, one's heart moves back to the common life, and bourgeois witticisms become ill-timed, short-sighted, and unimaginative.

Against that bourgeois quality of the first Free State government one is forced to put the man who overthrew it—for he makes the natural contrast. Whatever may be said about De Valera he has a natural simplicity as of an unassuming family man. That appeals strongly to the mass of the people. Even the fact that his wife rarely appears in public pleases the women-folk who, traditionally, are themselves almost entirely domestic in their interests. His life is known to be so simple as to be almost ascetic; he does not smoke or drink; any night one may walk past Government Buildings and see his car waiting for him as late as eleven o'clock. And it is there again, regularly, early in the morning. When one of his sons was killed while riding in the Phoenix Park the spontaneity of public sympathy was striking. To the people he is always "Dev." Only one other of his old colleagues had the same friendly contact with the people, and that was Collins—"Mick", or "The Big Fellow."

De Valera's entry to office, and his personal influence and example, took this inchoate democracy and rushed it to the surface. His economic policy alone gave opportunities to countless small men. Its danger, it is true, is that it may create a new bourgeoisie. That remains to be seen. He reduced public functions to a minimum. He preached economy. He put, by example and word, a premium on things native. Sometimes it was extremely comical. Even his own followers—human men with natural human understanding and natural human desires—drew the line at his suggestion that, instead of importing tea from abroad, we should all drink milk or light Irish beer. It was significant that when Douglas Hyde was appointed first President of

Eire, under the New Constitution, his first "At Home" consisted exclusively of Irish-speaking guests.

A certain amount of all this was deliberate and self-conscious, as I have already said, a calculated appeal to the masses of the people. A certain amount of it is harmful and short-sighted. The whole drive for the revival of the Irish language has created a new vested interest, so that to-day a knowledge of spoken Irish is becoming more and more an actual class distinction —the mark of the white-collar brigade. The bus-man, the engine-driver, the farm-worker, the labourer, the shop-hand—all these are being shoved down by the Irish speakers who are packing into the Civil Service, into Education, into all local appointments. De Valera is blind to this; or else prefers that it should be so than that the native language should, in avoiding these associations, not get the fillip it can get through official patronage.

There is another thing which has to be noted about the kind of society which the infant Free State developed and which was taken over by De Valera: and this may help the reader to understand something of the general mentality of the present-day Irish Republican. Owing to the 'split', or Civil War, in 1922, following the acceptance of the Treaty, influences came into power in the infant Free State which had, historically, and politically, no claim to influence. The classes which had openly, or more commonly secretly, opposed, or held back from the revolutionary movement of 1913–1921—the cautious, conservative, professional and business classes—realising towards the end of the Troubles what was about to happen began to insinuate themselves as fast as they could into the movement they had feared, hated, or

despised. This always happens in revolutionary movements. Even in that mild Home Rule movement of John Redmond's it began to happen fully a year before the outbreak of the European War, when John Dillon was writing feverishly to John Redmond that the Gresham Hotel in Dublin was already swarming with office-seekers (under a vaguely possible Irish Government!) The same jackals began to gather in 1921. Had there been no split in the nationalist movement they would probably have been quickly repressed. Owing to the split they found themselves unexpectedly welcome. Naturally they did not side with De Valera and Republicanism. Lost causes had no appeal for them. As a result there appeared a sharp division in Irish life between the conservative, and self-seeking, and the more democratic and idealistic—the latter represented by the De Valera party. One is not so foolish as to imagine that this division was or is still clear. That would be nonsense. Men like Collins, Mulcahy, Hogan or Higgins, were and are just as democratic and idealistic as any. With the rise to power of De Valera the self-seekers have gently turned their coats once more. One takes it for granted : it is the nature of life. But that there *is* a distinct social flavour about De Valera-ism there can be no question.

Another effect of the split has been that the Catholic Church gained tremendous influence in the new Ireland. It is the greatest organised body of power in the country, and inevitably the infant Free State, faced by a civil war, had to angle for its support. There was really very little need to angle. The Church in every country will always support, to the limit of human justice, established government. That is natural and proper. Had there

been no split the Church would, in all probability, have had much less influence of a purely political nature. Now, the Church opposed De Valera during the Civil War: it had no words too harsh for those who fought for the ideal of the Republic after 1921. It denied such young men the sacraments, priests turned them out of the confessionals, and preached against them from the altars. Republicanism in 1922–1924 was, as a result, definitely anti-Clerical. One might, therefore, expect that on De Valera's rise to power the influence of the Church would decline. It has not done so. For one thing it was too firmly consolidated in power after ten years of the Free State. For another thing even De Valera in fighting his way back had to court it—one speaks only in terms of politics. And he must be a very foolish man who does not know that as between De Valera, the unpredictable rebel, the defier of the hierarchy, and Mr. Cosgrave, the conservative and pliant, the Catholic hierarchy would far prefer to see the latter in power. So, there cannot be a Ministry in Government Buildings to-day whose files are not bulging with correspondence from clergy of every degree. There is certainly no local office of the slightest importance in which the clergy has not an indirect vote.

In theory this is not to be wholly deplored. Ireland is a country of more or less unsophisticated people, with little tradition in self-government, and leadership and guidance must come from somewhere. The only weakness in the scheme of clerical influence is that the mass of the clergy are themselves not particularly cultivated or sophisticated, while the really intelligent groups, like the Jesuits and Dominicans, are precisely those who (for various reasons of organisation and discipline)

exercise the least political influence. Furthermore the Catholic Church, and the Church of Ireland, are both notoriously 'low church', puritanical, and narrow-minded. To say this, naturally, will anger most Irish readers.

It is none-the-less a regrettable fact. Its effects may be seen daily in such things as the inhuman treatment of unmarried mothers, in the unimaginative control of juvenile houses of detention, in a stupid censorship—which is really a good idea badly worked—in the fanatical way in which such innocent amusements as dancing or the modest games-of-chance are controlled through the District Courts, where the Parish Priest inevitably turns up to oppose, never once to support, every other application for a licence. This indirect power of the church, nowhere seen more clearly than in the educational system (there are only one or two schools not controlled by the clergy) must always be remembered as an annotation on the degree of freedom in action enjoyed by De Valera, or any other Irish statesman. In short Republicanism in Ireland wears too many pious emblems on its *bonnet rouge* for anybody to take it very seriously as an intellectual or forward movement.

There is this also to be said for De Valera's ideas about a democratic Ireland—that they are tinged with his own youthful provincialism. Those great, infectious, germinating ideas of democracy which first broke on the world in the eighteenth century, originated in a highly sophisticated society among men of the greatest learning and culture. A democratic ideal emerging from Cirey or Montmorency, articulated in the *Encyclopédie* by men like d'Alembert, Diderot, or Turgot, is a very different matter to a democratic ideal emerging from

Middle Abbey Street in Dublin, and articulated by the innocent devotees of the Gaelic League. The original Irish democrats, Wolfe Tone, Daniel O'Connell, the Young Irelanders, were steeped in European thought and were men of considerable talent, and sometimes real culture: or if "culture" may sound "phoney" and synthetic, they were men in the widest sense human, and full of human interests in all that was, intellectually alive and procreant about them.

There is something limited, negative, even smug, in the self-appraisal of the modern Irish Republican who lines up behind De Valera. The chaos of modern Europe contributes to that self-satisfaction; he can at least say—"We are not as bad as *that*!" And in approving of what accident has helped Ireland to evade, in large degree, he forgets all that Europe has achieved, and all that Ireland has not even begun to achieve. One does not, for instance, expect a government to be a patron of the arts, but it is rather astonishing that De Valera himself has been inside the Irish national theatre, the Abbey Theatre, only once in his life, and then only to attend a translation by one of his followers of a bad pietistic play by a Portuguese. The educational policy of his government is wholly unimaginative; gives satisfaction to nobody, it is rumoured not even to himself; and has added nothing to the schemes of his predecessors. The only manifestations of interest in the development of Irish culture by his government—elaborate schemes for the revival of Gaelic, and an annual subsidy to the Abbey Theatre—were both initiated by the government which he succeeded.

There is very little, if any, sign of awareness on his part or on the part of his followers of this inanition. On

the contrary they are contemptuously aggressive in the face of even the mildest criticism. Small vocal groups, like the Gaelic League, the Gaelic Athletic Association, the Old I.R.A., seem to dominate the mind of the government, and the political caution of the latter-day De Valera flatters them in and out of season.

Again it must be said, he is not a creative or original mind. He is magnificent when he expresses something latent in Irish life or patent in Irish political tradition. Then he speaks with dignity, and often with imaginative force. But when it comes to originating some cultural ideal for Ireland which its history has not previously adumbrated, he is no better than the mass of his colleagues and followers. He once gave an appalling illustration of this, when addressing a gathering of Irish speakers in the Civil Service. He declared that if he were obliged to choose for Ireland between the Gaelic language and political liberty, he would prefer Ireland to speak Irish and be otherwise unfree. When one casts the mind back to the condition of Ireland when that was a fact—the eighteenth century for example, when Ireland still spoke Gaelic but was a nation of cringing slaves, with only the poorest remnants of an old culture, and not even the rudiments of a new one, it becomes difficult to understand what idea of democracy, in any living sense, can have inspired the speaker. Probably it was one of the more unhappily exuberant moments of a normally unexuberant and humane politician.

Nevertheless, and knowing that one cannot expect from any one man in his time more than it is in him to give, De Valera has, and it is a great deal, at least accepted the fact of an Ireland composed of its own elements—the common people who rose under O'Connell,

followed Parnell, Davitt, and Collins, and have now at last an opportunity for unfettered self-development. It may be only a wild hope, or a belief in this common life, or a trust in the realistic side of the man, but many of us do feel, to-day, as we enter Dublin and suddenly get in the air the homely tang of turf smoke, that he more than anyone else has spread that tang of common life through Ireland, and that simple men are taking slow courage from him after centuries during which their hearts were cold, and their courage numb. If popular life in Ireland remains inert, self-satisfied, null, the blame will be less on him—though he is leader—than on the people themselves. He has bound the poor to him—the poor of the town and the small farmers. They feel closer to him than to any of his colleagues or predecessors. On the eve of a recent election in the West an old woman went to a cross-roads shop to buy some canned food, and was told by the shop keeper that it had risen in price. "There's what your De Valera has done for you," taunted the shop keeper. "Now will you vote for him?" "I'd vote for him," said the old woman, "if I was to starve!"

So much lends itself to some weak effort at expression. Behind it all is the inexpressible. For that through this summary no other word has offered itself but the word "symbol." The firm persistence of the man, his iterations of the national tradition of independence, that sometimes maddening, absolute assurance of the rightness of his opinion, erects him before the people as a man who, in the main thing, is consistent. All lesser inconsistencies fall away before that central core of consistency. The public is not a fool. It knows the man does, in many things, deceive himself, but it is not itself deceived. But

it is also, in another sense, not a fool, and it knows that it is the brutal force of circumstances that has forced him on occasion to retreat, and it knows that he will always come back, as soon as he gets half a chance, to his and their abiding passion.

He may make the terrible mistake of the Civil War —in so far as his portion of the responsibility for that war is concerned; he may take an Oath to get into the Dáil; he may threaten to alter the method of elections —never is it for any personal gain, always for Ireland. Fundamentally his political honesty is unimpeachable. It is only his biographers who are obliged to comment on each phase, and whose business it is to search for the natural man behind the symbolic man, who find themselves, at times, somewhat chilled; and even then, not half so much by any act, as by the accompanying stubborn refusal to admit the slightest, intermediate, fault or inconsistency. If only, the biographer feels, De Valera would once or twice say, "I am not infallible. I am no hero. I am no saint. I had to contradict myself. It was for Ireland"—the heart would open more readily to him, and one could without detriment either to the symbol or the man create the hero in full admiration. So one does with Tone, so merry, so human, so gay; so one does with Collins, so boisterous, so natural, so passionate, so un-self-aware; so one does with O'Connell, with his hat on the side of his head and the merry rogue's wink in his eye, a rascal to whom one forgives everything.

And yet is it not, perhaps, merely the times that are against De Valera? These times in which we insist on slitting men open to look deep into them? Fifty years ago a biographer would have been content with the

merely public figure. Perhaps that has something to say for it, though consideration tells us that as time passes and the force and necessity of the symbol with it, we do require of our great public figures that they should be coherent inside and out, and that above all things there should be, to themselves at least, *no self-concealment.*

There were, in his recent career, three occasions when his honesty was shining, and when he won for himself a host of supporters who formerly doubted his integrity. The first occasion was in September, 1932, when as a member of the League of Nations, and its President, he spoke with so much frank forcefulness about the League that everyone who wished well to the League saw in him a man who was prepared to say what all thought but none would express.

His words are worth quoting as an example of the man at his best. He said (I give excerpts from a lengthy speech):—

> "It has often been said that in the final analysis the League has no sanction but the force of world opinion. At the moment this is profoundly true, and it seems to me, therefore, that in the best interests of the League a wider review of its work should be undertaken on occasions like this, not so much in the light of the knowledge and the difficulties as in the light of the fear, the criticism, the prejudices, if you like, of public opinion in our respective countries. It is time for us to ask ourselves what is the attitude of the outsider, the average man and woman, to the League and its activities.
>
> "The people feel that the testing-time has come,

and are watching to see if that test will reveal weakness presaging ultimate disillusion or a strength that will be an assurance of renewed vigour and growth. . . . Let us be frank with ourselves. There are complaints, criticisms, and suspicions. People are complaining that the League is devoting its activities to matters of secondary or even minor importance, while the vital international problems of the day—problems affecting the existence of the people—are being shelved, postponed, or ignored. . . . There is the suspicion abroad that little more than lip-service is being paid to the fundamental principles on which the League is founded. There is the suspicion that the action of the League in the economic sphere can be paralysed by the pressure of powerful national interests, and if the hand raised against the Covenant is sufficiently strong it can smite with impunity. . . . No state is powerful enough to stand for long against the League if the governments and their peoples are determined that the Covenant shall be upheld. The League will be judged by the success or failure of the Disarmament Conference. Without progressive disarmament it is almost impossible for the League to survive."

Turning to economic conditions he said—and even though the reader may feel here that his words are the words of the persistent idealist, he may also, in the light of modern events, have at least a tremor that De Valera was speaking very much to the point, after all:—

"One hundred million people are faced with starvation in a world of plenty. It is our duty to face

this situation frankly and honestly, not as the representatives of states, or parties, or special interests, but as men who recognise that the primary duty of statesmen, national and international, is to plan for the well-being of their fellows, the plain, ordinary human being of every country. . . . It is our duty to suggest that in this and other fields the time has come for action. The whole basis of production, distribution, and credit must be completely overhauled. . . . If we shirk this task and fail to make the changes obviously necessary, and to reorganise our economic life deliberately and purposefully, we will be failing in our duty and failing disastrously."

It is not surprising that this unorthodox speech was listened to in silence. And yet the only criticism which one can reasonably make of it—namely, that to utter noble sentiments is more easy for the nation which does not bear the more costly responsibility—does not invalidate the force of its truth. These were things which had to be said about the League by somebody. Besides every nation, large and small, is presumed to bear the same *moral* responsibility.

During the Abyssinian war and the Spanish Civil War De Valera had considerable difficulty at home in standing by the League position. As regards Abyssinia, the state of public opinion in Ireland was peculiar. Theoretically it should have been on the side of the smaller nation. But it is the curse of nationalist opinion in Ireland, especially of the Left, that it lacks independence: it automatically looks to see what Great Britain is doing in any given situation, and without a thought it does the opposite. The Left, observing that Great

Britain was favouring Abyssinian claims, became immediately suspicious. At the same time the Right, or Cosgrave (Opposition) party, saw an opportunity for scoring off De Valera, arguing that Ireland should agree to co-operate only on terms. Both to Left and Right De Valera replied with an unusual flash of humour that if he should by chance find himself on the road to heaven in bad company, he would be foolish for that reason to go to the other place. There was nothing heavenly about the Abyssinian question, but at the time there seemed to be a question of right and wrong, and De Valera's sharp remark to Mr. Cosgrave that he could not barter about doing the right thing—that you either did it or did not do it—was one of the most effective points he has ever made in debate.

The Spanish question was far more delicate. Here the Right had on its side the bulk of Catholic opinion. The Church was strongly pro-Franco. The Left in recognising the Spanish Government was open to the charge of being Communist. A tremendous pietistic movement sprang up under the joint leadership of General O'Duffy, who led an Irish Brigade (it never did amount to the strength of a brigade) to Spain to fight "for Christ" against the "Reds", and a Mr. Patrick Belton, who launched a civil Christian Front movement to support with donations and by influence, the Insurgent forces. (The midway position of De Valera, in refusing to recognise General Franco, while supporting the non-intervention pact, gives some indication of the general midway position of the brand of Irish nationalism which he represents.) For a period the Christian Front movement seemed a serious threat to De Valera. Fortunately for him the Spanish War was

prolonged. The O'Duffy contingent lacked staying-power and returned home—it got a poor "press." The official Church did not bless Mr. Belton's Christian Front—the Catholic Church in Ireland is generally somewhat chary of recognising the over-officious lay-man; and other matters intervened to distract attention from Spain. Nevertheless a weaker man than De Valera might well have ruined himself by temporising with so powerful an opposition. He demonstrated an old truth in Irish politics—that the only force which can stand up against Pietism and its offshoots, is Nationalism. No force on earth can stand against the combination of these two emotions, rooted as they are deep in Irish history and the genius of the race.

De Valera's position in Ireland to-day is well-nigh impregnable. Yet, it has its weak points, and like most rigid structures, any one crack may suddenly bring disaster. The outbreak of bomb-explosions in England revealed one of these weak joints.

In effect, these outbreaks were really directed against him and his policy of partial conciliation. They were intended to alienate him from Great Britain and Great Britain from him. When he ventured to introduce legislation against the "I.R.A." at that time, public opinion in Ireland went sharply against him. As the "I.R.A." had shrewdly foreseen he was felt to be allying himself with the ancient enemy. Perhaps he might have succeeded immediately in swinging Irish opinion against these men had not the British courts decided to inflict on them the most severe sentences.

In one case, that of a man named Gerald Wharton, the judge made some comments of a general nature which were bitterly resented by the Irish people. That

particular case roused so much feeling in Ireland that it was a piece of good-luck for De Valera that when Wharton appealed against his sentence he was released. In short, as these incidents illustrated—and their effects still remain—only so long as he expresses the simple, antique sentiments of the people is De Valera safe.

These sentiments will no doubt become not so much dulled as elaborated out of their present acuity in the course of time. A larger sophistication will remove from them their simple force and directness. The complexity of a more varied mode of life will make them a mere part of a larger variety of emotions, as it has done in every country in the world where national feeling, or religious feeling, are only a comparatively small part of the motivation of men's actions. Then no man who represents national tradition will succeed again as he is succeeding to-day, unless, like some modern totalitarian leader, he re-establishes the nationalistic formula in all its naked, primitive, and brutal simplicity. But it will be a long, long time before Ireland—so rooted in the past, so simple in its modes of life, a rural community for the most part—passes from its present state of arcadian surety about all human things.

When that happens, if it ever happens, for Ireland is an unpredictable country, it is possible that De Valera will be recorded by thought-troubled Irishmen much as thought-troubled Americans to-day record Lincoln; a man from the antique world—brave and wise and virtuous and simple. And any such chance, nostalgic reader who may come on this little book, in posterity, may wonder that his contemporaries did not accept him wholeheartedly as such. The adjectives are relative terms. We do not doubt his courage. Posterity must

decide on his political wisdom. As to his simplicity, there is no man so maddeningly complicated as the politician who poses as being simple. While as for "virtue", what later Irishman, having uttered the word "politician", can speak of it without so much re-orientation of the mind, and shuffling about of values, and qualifying provisoes, as to find himself back in the sophisticated world of which he had thought to take leave in reading of the arcadian nineteen-thirties?

Otherwise Virtue looms large in this Ireland. De Valera's concept of life is that of a dreary Eden, and the meagre flesh-pots he offers to his as yet unconverted Egyptians (e.g. "milk or light beer for breakfast instead of tea") are always associated by him in a melancholy way, with duty and patriotism. A levee at the President's establishment, for instance, is about as cheerful as a wake, and elegance in all matters controlled by the authorities is rare only in the lesser sense of the word. No future Irishman need envy these days, except in so far as they have the stimulus of infinite possibilities, and of a road now virtually clear of the encumbrances and obstacles of international commitments. For the clearance of the road De Valera must largely be thanked, since had there been no De Valera the Treaty position would in all probability have now consolidated itself, and an Irish Free State be in existence bound spiritually and politically to the alien influence it was supposed to have severed. The old *Morning Post* once said wittily that Ireland has, and always has had, and always will have a great future. It is something to have a future, even—to be metaphysical—if one never reaches it. It is at least better than to have, like the now defunct *Post*, nothing but a past.

The curious thing about De Valera, in the final summary, is that he has kept the way open to that indigenous Irish future—a considerable political achievement—without offering any guidance as to the shape of things to come, other than by pointing backwards to that past from which he draws sustenance—but on which a modern, progressive people can hardly be expected to feed perpetually. For he has no time for the prospect unless it is implicit in the retrospect. And he guards himself against the danger that the future may have no time for him by making himself a piece of history rather than a man.

His great aim is to be bigger than the moment, so that all things should emerge safely as recognisable historical generalisations. Life being of greater variety and, as he is not, creative, will inevitably leave him behind. That will not trouble him: he will be happy with that ancient tradition which, like Diana of the Ephesians, has had the wherewithal to nourish the seven generations. When the eighth comes, and it is now about due, his day and work will be done. As for his fame, that may be left to Time, the only critic who does not lie. Meanwhile somebody like myself, a biographer or a novelist interested in the solid variety and warm colour of human nature, wrestles with him uneasily terrified lest at any moment he should vanish—as an abstraction.

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	The Wallet of Kai Lung
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The Roman Nose

Both combatants had thrown off their coats and waistcoats, and stood sword in hand. The seconds stood on each side of the line of fight with drawn swords also, but still sombre in their dark frock-coats and hats. The principals saluted. The Colonel said quietly, "Engage!" and the two blades touched and tingled.

As soon as he had seen the sunlight run down the channel of his foe's foreshortened blade, and as soon as he had felt the two tongues of steel touch, vibrating like two living things, he knew that his enemy was a terrible fighter, and that probably his last hour had come.

But while earth and sky and everything had the living beauty of a thing lost, the other half of his head was as clear as glass, and he was parrying his enemy's point with a kind of clockwork skill of which he had hardly supposed himself capable. Once his enemy's point ran along his wrist, leaving a slight streak of blood, but it either was not noticed or was tacitly ignored. Every now and then he *riposted*, and once or twice he could almost fancy that he felt his point go home, but as there was no blood on blade or shirt he supposed he was mistaken. Then came an interruption and a change.

At the risk of losing all, the Marquis, interrupting his quiet stare, flashed one glance over his shoulder at the line of railway on his right. Then he turned on Syme a face transfigured to that of a fiend, and began to fight as if with twenty weapons. The attack came so fast and furious, that the one shining sword seemed a showe

CONTINUED

COMPLETE LIST
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	Penguin Parade (3)
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	Penguin Parade (5)
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The Roman Nose *(continued)*

of shining arrows. Syme had no chance to look at the railway, but also he had no need. He could guess the reason of the Marquis's sudden madness of battle—the Paris tram was in sight.

But the Marquis's morbid energy over-reached itself. Twice Syme, parrying, knocked his opponent's point far out of the fighting circle; and the third time his *riposte* was so rapid, that there was no doubt about the hit this time. Syme's sword actually bent under the weight of the Marquis's body, which it had pierced. Syme was as certain that he had stuck his blade into his enemy as a gardener that he has stuck his spade into the ground. Yet the Marquis sprang back from the stroke without a stagger, and Syme stood staring at his own sword-point like an idiot. There was no blood on it at all.

There was an instant of rigid silence, and then Syme in his turn fell furiously on the other, filled with a flaming curiosity. The Marquis was probably, in a general sense, a better fencer than he, as he had surmised at the beginning, but at the moment the Marquis seemed distraught and at a disadvantage. He fought wildly and even weakly, and he constantly looked away at the railway line, almost as if he feared the train more than the pointed steel. Syme, on the other hand, fought fiercely but still carefully, in an intellectual fury, eager to solve the riddle of his own bloodless sword. For this purpose, he aimed less at the Marquis's body, and more at his throat and head. A minute and a half afterwards he felt his point enter the man's neck below the jaw. It came out clean. Half mad, he thrust again, and made what should have been a bloody scar on the Marquis's cheek. But there was no scar.

For one moment the heaven of Syme again grew black with supernatural terrors. Surely the man had

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COMPLETE LIST
CONTINUED

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The Roman Nose *(continued)*

a charmed life. But this new spiritual dread was a more awful thing than had been the mere spiritual topsy turvydom symbolised by the paralytic who pursued him. The Professor was only a goblin; this man was a devil—perhaps he was the Devil! Anyhow, this was certain, that three times had a human sword been driven into him and made no mark. When Syme had that thought he drew himself up, and all that was good in him sang high up in the air as a high wind sings in the trees. He thought of all the human things in his story—of the Chinese lanterns in Saffron Park, of the girl's red hair in the garden, of the honest, beer-swilling sailors down by the dock, of his loyal companions standing by. Perhaps he had been chosen as a champion of all these fresh and kindly things to cross swords with the enemy of all creation. "After all," he said to himself, "I am more than a devil; I am a man. I can do the one thing which Satan himself cannot do—I can die," and as the word went through his head, he heard a faint and far-off hoot, which would soon be the roar of the Paris train.

He fell to fighting again with a supernatural levity, like a Mohammedan panting for Paradise. As the train came nearer and nearer he fancied he could see people putting up the floral arches in Paris; he joined in the growing noise and the glory of the great Republic whose gate he was guarding against Hell. His thoughts rose higher and higher with the rising roar of the train, which ended, as if proudly, in a long and piercing whistle. The train stopped.

Suddenly, to the astonishment of everyone the Marquis sprang back quite out of sword reach and threw down his sword. The leap was wonderful, and not the less wonderful because Syme had plunged his sword a moment before into the man's thigh.

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The Roman Nose (continued)

"Stop!" said the Marquis in a voice that compelled a momentary obedience. "I want to say something."

"What is the matter?" asked Colonel Ductoy, staring. "Has there been foul play?"

"There has been foul play somewhere," said Dr Bull, who was a little pale. "Our principal has wounded the Marquis four times at least, and he is none the worse."

The Marquis put up his hand with a curious air of ghostly patience.

"Please let me speak," he said. "It is rather important. Mr Syme," he continued, turning to his opponent, "we are fighting to-day, if I remember right, because you expressed a wish (which I thought irrational) to pull my nose. Would you oblige me by pulling my nose now as quickly as possible? I have to catch a train."

"I protest that this is most irregular," said Dr Bull indignantly.

"It is certainly somewhat opposed to precedent," said Colonel Ductoy, looking wistfully at his principal. "There is, I think, one case on record (Captain Bellegarde and the Baron Zumpt) in which the weapons were changed in the middle of the encounter at the request of one of the combatants. But one can hardly call one's nose a weapon."

"Will you or will you not pull my nose?" said the Marquis in exasperation. "Come, come, Mr Syme! You wanted to do it, do it! You can have no conception how important it is to me. Don't be selfish. Pull my nose at once, when I ask you!" and he bent slightly forward with a fascinating smile. The Paris train, panting and groaning, had grated into a little station behind the neighbouring hill.

Syme had the feeling he had more than once had in these adventures—the sense that a horrible and sublime wave lifted to heaven was just toppling over. Walking in a world he half understood, he

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